2009-2010

LESBIAN GAY BISEXUAL TRANSGENDER (LGBT) RESOURCE CENTER
ASSESSMENT FOR IMPROVING PROGRAM PERFORMANCE

by

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&

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ABSTRACT

At the end of every academic school year, the LGBT Resource Center coordinates focus groups to attain feedback from key stakeholders within the LGBT community that includes undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty and staff members. Six focus groups were coordinated by a graduate student principal investigator and from the finding the investigator created general recommendations. These recommendations will be considered for the following academic school year when developing new interventions and coordinating existing programs and services. Below is a brief synopsis of some of the recommendations.

- Generate programs and services that incorporate the diversity within the LGBT community, including supportive Allies, gender identity/expression, ethnicity and campus affiliations
- Increase publicity efforts for programs and services
- Advocate for collaboration between the different LGBT campus organizations to create large-scale events and guest speakers
In spring 2010, Vincent Vigil, the Director of the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT) Resource Center at the University of Southern California (USC) acquired assistance from Andrea Elzy, a graduate student in the Postsecondary Administration and Student Affairs (PASA) Program at the USC Rossier School of Education, to conduct a program performance assessment that assessed the overall attitudes from LGBT Resource Center stakeholders about programs and services sponsored throughout the 2009-2010 academic school year. This assessment is similar to previous reports completed by the center with similar goals, which was to gather recommendations on how the center can continue to improve and expand their programs and services for university constituencies and institute intervention strategies.

In the 2006-2007 report, the center created intervention strategies to improve promotion and outreach for the center’s supportive programs/services. Based on recommendations, the principal investigators found stakeholders wanted the center’s supportive resources that included, University Rap (uRap), a weekly confidential discussion group and the LGBT Peer Mentoring Program, a peer-to-peer mentoring program, to be better promoted to students. The stakeholders expressed that many LGBT students were unaware of the supportive programs/services for confused, questioning or students that recently came out that are sponsored by the LGBT Resource Center. The overall recommendations for the supportive services included additional promotional strategies to reach out to more students.

As a result, the center created a new, interactive website specifically for the LGBT Peer Mentoring Program that included videos of LGBT students talking about their personal experiences of coming out, being gay and Greek and more. The goal of this site was to allow closeted and questioning students the opportunity to learn more about the program from the privacy of their own computer. The videos were an aspect of the site to provide guidance and
advice to online visitors, without stopping by the center or participating in a student organization meeting, if they did not feel comfortable. Since the launch of this site in 2008, participation in the mentoring program has tripled from 10 mentors and mentees per semester to 30 overall participants in 2009. The site, along with uRap, was featured in new promotional items that included business card size information flyers that were distributed across campus. The size was important—allowing closeted or questioning students could easily place in their pockets to avoid being seen with a LGBT flyer. Today, the new promotional strategies for the supportive programs still prove beneficial: with increased participation in the LGBT Peer Mentoring Program at uRap discussions (approx. 30 students per week).

In addition, for the 2007-2008 performance report, the investigators discovered that the stakeholders felt the campus community needed to be better educated about transgender identity and advocacy for transgender students. This was in large part due to an increase in transgender identified students involved with the campus community. In response, the center worked with campus administrators and advocated for an easier method to change one’s name and gender with the university on class rosters and university identification cards, which would benefit transgender students. Also, the center assisted the GLBT Student Assembly (GLBTA) with their transgender-related events that included a second annual Gender Justice Week and transgender discussions. As a result of this report there are visible transgender support web pages in the center’s new website (anticipated 2010 launch) that address medical resources, campus services and local resources for transgender students.

Investigators for the 2008-2009 program performance report found that stakeholders would benefit from additional collaborations with local Los Angeles LGBT community resources and non-profit organizations. It seemed the stakeholders wanted to create and establish
better networking connections for them and their organizations. Also, stakeholders voiced a concern that the Faculty and Staff LGBT Ally Program lacked visibility with the many different departments on campus. The center created Departmental Ally Consultations for the departments within the Division of Student Affairs. Promotional materials about this new initiative were sent to the over 40 departments within the division to encourage each department to coordinate a private Ally Training for their departments. Although only a couple of departments responded, the center will continue with this initiative and in fall 2010 will expand to other Student Affairs departments at the different schools.

In response to the request for collaborations with Los Angeles resources, the center reached out to a few LGBT non-profit organizations and created network events for stakeholders. The center co-sponsored The LGBT Intercollegiate Mixer in the fall semester with the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center and The University of California, Los Angeles; a mixer with over 200 students from local colleges and universities. The center also hosted The LGBT & Ally College Prep Day and Fair in the spring semester with Campus Pride and Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) Network; a college preparation day for local LGBT high school students. Furthermore, the GLBTA established an intercollegiate chair position on their executive board with the goal of networking with local colleges and universities. As a result, this chair coordinated three events for USC students and students from local colleges and universities in the academic school year.

The intervention strategies created based on the previous performance assessments have been successful and have met the needs of an ever-changing LGBT and Ally population. For the past six years, the center has made a conscious effort to include supportive Allies as our constituency because the Allies are crucial members of our community to help bridge acceptance on our campus. To clarify, the term Ally is “a person who is a member of the dominant or
majority group who works to end oppression in his or her personal and professional life through support of, and as an advocate for, the oppressed population” (Washington and Evans). Straight Allies are some of the most effective and powerful advocates for the LGBT community. Due to this continued inclusion, Allies continue to be a respected constituency of stakeholders holding leadership positions in student organizations and work-study positions in the center. In fact, for the 2010-2011 academic year the Queer & Ally Student Assembly (formerly known as GLBTA) elected the first Ally in USC history to serve as the Executive Director for the assembly.

It is the hope that continuing this program performance will keep the center’s programs and services aligned with the needs of LGBT students and supportive Allies. This report will provide a step-by-step analysis of the assessment process based on the steps provided by the USC Student Affairs Assessment Committee along with feedback and recommendations.

PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

The LGBT Resource Center Director developed a plan with a graduate student to create a program performance assessment similar to past assessments that began in the 2006-2007 academic year. The director, Vincent Vigil, and graduate student, Andrea Elzy served as principal investigators for this assessment. The goal is to learn methods in which the center can improve existing programs and services. The center has received national recognition from the “The Advocate College Guide,” (Alyson Books, 2006) and the City of Los Angeles Proclamation in 2008. The center was also recognized by university peers with an ‘Outstanding Collaborator Award’ for the spring 2009 MUSCLEBOUND program, which was co-sponsored by USC Athletics, Center for Women and Men, Recreational Sports, Recreational Club Council, University Park Health Center, and Health Promotion and Prevention Services. Most recently in
spring 2010, the center received an ‘Assessment Award’ from the USC Student Affairs Assessment Committee and the GLBTA was recognized with a Tommy Award for ‘Best Cultural Organization’ for 2009-2010 academic year.

Although the center has received distinguished awards, it is important to gain insight from stakeholders and continue to develop successful programs and services. For this assessment, Andrea conducted focus groups with campus stakeholders (e.g., undergraduate students, faculty members and staff members). For the 2008-2009 performance assessment the stakeholders identified were undergraduate LGBT students, LGBT Faculty and Staff members and supportive Allies that were undergraduate students, staff and faculty members. The 2009-2010 assessment includes additional organizations within the USC community, and additionally utilizes an online perceptions survey to gain further insight.

This summary report highlights improvement recommendations given about the existing programs and services and purposefully neglects to highlight the positive opinions given to keep the focus on improvements.

STEP 1: STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

The center’s programs and services address three of the USC Division of Student Affairs Strategic Initiatives, which are:

- Foster an Intellectually Centered Student Culture
  Provide students with opportunities for meaningful intellectual interactions through co-curricular experiences.

- Preserve and Advance the Unique USC Student Experience
  Maintain and advance what is unique about the USC student experience (leadership;
community; pride; tradition; spirit; networking) through the strategic investment of fiscal and human resources in facilities and staff.

This assessment will address the following strategic initiative.

- Invention the Future of Student Services

Deliver and coordinate excellent student service across the institution and taking the leadership role in coordinating student services to meet the needs of diverse learners in a technologically sophisticated academic environment while maintaining the personal touch, which currently characterizes our work.

STEP 2: GOAL FOR THE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

Similar to the previous program performances, the principal investigators put together this assessment to become the “learners” and understand the perspectives from the different constituencies involved with the focus groups. From the shared commentaries, we wanted to learn what intervention strategies can be implemented to improve the center and continually improve the department for our stakeholders.

STEP 3: DEVELOP A PLAN

*Define the Problem and Clarify the Objective*

To help define any problems associated with the center and clarify the goals for the assessment, the Director answered questions that addressed his current perceptions of the existing programs and services. The responses (see Appendix A) were used to assist the graduate student with the formation of questions for the focus groups. A summary of the Director’s responses are below.
• The LGBT community has student subpopulations that hinders the creation of a broader and more inclusive sense of community and/or family

• Negative perceptions exist for involved students that are leaders in LGBT student organizations or residents on the Rainbow Floor

• Lack of support and mentorship for juniors and seniors especially as they prepare for their career goals

STEP 4: ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES

Formation of Questions

Principal investigators Andrea Elzy and Vincent Vigil created a purposeful grouping of questions that targeted each population of students based on the corresponding focus group (see Appendix B). The outcomes for the assessment are below:

• Participants will provide critical feedback on the programs and resources provided by the LGBT Resource Center.

• Participants will engage in discussion related to their perceptions of the LGBT Resource Center.

• Participants will review and critique programs and resources provided by the LGBT Resource Center.

Data Collection

The principal investigators formulated a plan to implement focus groups for specific stakeholders that included LGBT and Ally identified undergraduate students, faculty and staff members. The strategy was to conduct the focus groups at already existent LGBT student organization meetings and create a special focus group for faculty and staff members. As an
Incentive food and refreshments were provided for all the sessions. Student workers from the center, and a graduate student from Residential Education attended individual focus groups to serve as written recorders. All sessions were also audio recorded.

The following are the dates and LGBT organizations involved with the focus groups:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 22, 2010</td>
<td>GLBTA Focus Group</td>
<td>University Religious Center (URC) Room 103</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 22, 2010</td>
<td>University Rap (uRap) Focus Group</td>
<td>University Religious Center (URC) Room 103</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 30, 2010</td>
<td>First Year Focus Group</td>
<td>Parkside International Residential College (PIRC) Room 1016</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 6, 2010</td>
<td>LGBT Graduate/Professional Student Focus Group</td>
<td>ONE Institute</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 8, 2010</td>
<td>Faculty Staff Focus Group</td>
<td>Student Union (STU) APASS/CBCSA Conference Room</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 11, 2010</td>
<td>Rainbow Floor Focus Group</td>
<td>Rainbow Floor</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Limitations**

Admittedly, the information collected from the focus groups were from students already involved with LGBT student services and did not represent a large range of new ideas and perspectives since a majority of participants were already involved with the student assembly, uRap and the Rainbow Floor. However, even though these students were involved with existent programs and services, the focus groups provided a safe space for them to express their opinions and ideas about improvements and suggestions for LGBT student services. One can argue that the invention strategies created based upon the finding may continue to entice and encourage their involvement.
It must also be stated that the Director for the LGBT Resource Center played a dual role in this process as a coordinator and reviewer. Rather than being completely removed from the process, he coordinated the focus group meetings and assisted with the formulation of questions. He did not sit in the actual focus group sessions, but he was present at the beginning of some sessions to introduce the graduate student principal investigator. His mere presence before the discussion could have intimidated some of the participants from contributing to the discussion. In the end, the graduate principal investigator was the only person to review the findings from the focus groups and from the findings she created her own recommendations that were presented to the Director as a recipient of the research report.

**RESOURCES**

Vincent Vigil and Andrea Elzy created a strategic plan for the focus groups that included the logistics (e.g., venue reservations) financial expectations (e.g., purchase of food) and promotion (electronic publicity and posters in the Residential Halls).

*Meeting Rooms, Financial, and Staff Support*

Primary concerns for the venues were their location because the investigators wanted to make certain the venues was familiar and convenient for the stakeholders. The location should not be a barrier for focus group participants. Venue locations were chosen based on their proximity to the intended audience of stakeholders; for example, first year Residence Halls were used for focus groups aimed at first year students.

Funding for food and refreshments was provided by the center that totaled $219.87. This was a significant increase from the funding allocated from the previous year due to an effort to
include first year students and graduate/professional students. It has also increased because participation in the GLBTA and uRap has at least doubled since the previous academic year.

There were no additional costs for staff support at the focus groups. Work-study students from the center served as written recorders at the focus groups and were paid by their wages through the center and graduate student Andrew Olleró volunteered his time for the GLBTA focus group.

Existing Data

To help with the creation of the LGBT program performance assessment, Andrea reviewed the annual LGBT program assessment reports from previous years. Additionally, Andrea reviewed the Council for the Advancement of Standards of Higher Education (CAS) for LGBT programs and services (CAS Standards and Guidelines for LGBT Programs and Services, 2006).

FOCUS GROUPS FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings section was completed by investigator Andrea Elzy. Findings are based on themes presented by each stakeholder group. Admittedly, individual suggestions are all unique and different, but for the purpose of this program performance the overarching themes that emerged at the focus groups are presented. The focus group findings are as follows:

First Year Focus Group

- Creation of more publicity efforts for LGBT events
- Additional outreach at orientation
- Sponsor larger scale events with big name speakers or performers
- Increase collaboration among different departments within the university
GLBTA Focus Group

- More emphasis on large scale programming
- Allocation of budget to fund less programs and instead more larger scale programs
- Include Allies in the programming and make their support more visible
- Implement programs that focus on issues related to trans/underrepresented LGBT individuals
- More programs that focus on the lesbian identity

Graduate/Professional Student Focus Group

- More graduate level and academic centered programs
- Partnership with other multicultural offices on campus
- Additional collaborative events with the undergraduates

Faculty Staff Focus Group

- Student/Faculty collaborative centered programs
- More publicity for Faculty and Staff programs
- Make certain the publicity reflects the Ally Discussion content
- Programming beyond stereotypes
- Additional discussions about bisexual identity

Rainbow Floor Focus Group

- More partnership with LGBT Resource Center for programs
- Assessment of funding and attempt to advocate for additional funds
- Housing inclusion for transgender students
- Additional cultural programming with diverse student organizations
- Additional programs about lesbian identity
Based on the above findings, it was evident that each group of stakeholder had different individual and specific feedback based on their interests, development and perspectives. The feedback from students within GLBTA and the Rainbow Floor primarily focused on the scale and budget for programming for the next year, as well as outreach and publicity efforts. The graduate/professional students emphasized that they wanted to be more included with the campus LGBT community and they also expressed their dislike of programs being “hyper gay” or “hyper sexual.” The faculty and staff group discussed improvements with collaboration amongst departments as well as a more focused effort on outreach to staff and faculty members.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS AND FEEDBACK

An assessment of the data and feedback received at each focus group resulted in the following overarching themes of general improvements for LGBT programming on campus:

- Increase publicity efforts
- Implement Ally outreach programs
- Create programs that are not completely focused on gay identity but rather the other diverse sexual and gender identities existing within the LGBT Community.
- Sponsor larger-scale events
- Focus programs on lesbian and transgender identities
- Advocate for increased funding
- Advocate for a larger space for LGBT student resources. If a larger space is not available then find a space to meet confidentially with participants in the mentoring program.

The abovementioned overarching themes were presented throughout the focus groups. Moving forward, the first recommendation for the center is to analyze and rethink previous
promotional strategies for its programs and services. In particular, it is recommended that more emphasis be placed on programs that address the lesbian, bisexual, transgender and ally identities with less focus on the gay identity.

Another recommendation is for the center and the GLBTA to work together with campus departments to coordinate larger-scale events with well-known guest speakers. The events should focus on the quality of the events rather than large numbers of attendees. Since funding is an issue, it is important that collaboration with other departments is a major consideration to help make the larger scale events a reality. Larger-scale, successful events that attract a larger and more diverse audience can help create a plausible cause for additional funds from the Division of Student Affairs or the Undergraduate Student Government. It is important to continue to assess the programs and attain demographic information at these events, which can also aid in funding allocations.

The recommendation that relates to the administrative resources in terms of the small space for the center is difficult to address. However, it is important to note that student stakeholders felt limited in their access or desire to visit the center due to its small space. A solution can be to continue to have center-sponsored events around campus in larger spaces to make certain that students feel the support of the center at these events. In addition, the creation of a virtual center can assist in these feeling of alienation. With the launch of a new website, publicity efforts should promote the new online resources.
APPENDIX A
RESPONSES FROM THE DIRECTOR

Question: It is evident that the problems with your program and/or service appear when your program and/or service unsuccessfully meet the specific needs of your stakeholders. Therefore, it is important to analyze what it is your program and/or service is lacking. Ask yourself, what needs are your program and/or service not fulfilling? Why is your program and/or service not meeting these needs?

- Response: A need that the center is not fulfilling, in my opinion, is fostering better inclusivity for all LGBT students on campus – a stronger sense of family. I feel like there are negative perceptions or stereotypes amongst LGBT students about the LGBT students that choose to be involved with LGBT programs and services. In other words, the involved LGBT students have preconceived opinions about them from other students that choose not to be directly involved with LGBT activities. This creates a disconnect from subpopulations within the LGBT community. You have your “involved gays” and “not involved gays” and they are seen as two different subpopulations in the community, which may prevent potential students from getting involved with established programs and services. It would be best to get at the root of this disconnect to develop a plan to alleviate possible stereotypes and then create a positive image for the LGBT community. To get at the root of possible stereotypes of involved verses uninvolved LGBT students can be difficult because many of the different LGBT organizations on campus seem to be lumped together in the GLBT Assembly, which helps with coalition building but may hinder some student involvement. All the programs and services are seen as one rather than distinct and unique entities.
Another need that I think the center is not fulfilling is providing additional support to junior and senior students. With this recent economy and job market, I have seen more and more LGBT senior students each year leave the institution without a job or either not on track to get a job. This needs to change. The center has established programs for first-year students to assist with transition into college but it’s the transition out of college that needs to improve; for example, helping to connect students to internships, job opportunities and even the creation of a resume noting their LGBT leadership experience. With the current economic downturn, creating programs for our upperclassmen may assist them as they leave college and provide more focus for them as they enter the real world.

Question: Generate a general idea as to why your program and/or service is having these needs-base related problems. You may want to write down the needs your program and/or service is not fulfilling along with your assumptions as to why your program and/or service is not meeting these needs. In addition, you may create questions for your program and/or service asking why and how to improve the program and/or service.

- Response: To attain the perceptions of the LGBT Community from uninvolved LGBT students is difficult because 1) LGBT students are an invisible campus population and 2) the center primarily works with involved students. I have had conversations with some uninvolved students that say they at times feel like they do not “fit in” with the LGBT Community and that can be for various reasons about their own identity development. I think a longitude study or more interviews would need to be initiated aimed at the
uninvolved LGBT student to understand their perceptions of LGBT student services on campus.

However, I believe the center can do a better job fulfilling the needs of junior and senior students by working with current similar standing students or recent Alumni to understand how the center can better service them. As Director, I have initiated conversations with graduating students about their future plans and the importance of creating a resume. These students acknowledge the career resources on campus, but they do not use them until the last minute. Instead, we should be proactive with these services and expose these students to them ahead of time. Some questions I would ask junior and senior students include:

- Do you currently have an updated resume?
- What are your plans for the summer? Have you looked into some possible summer internships?
- What do you plan to do after college?

Question: The unfulfilled needs should be areas of learning your program and/or service is not promoting to your stakeholders. You may want to ask yourself, what aspects of learning are your programs and/or services suppose to incorporate and teach but are not? How can you guarantee that this learning takes place in your program and/or service?

- Response: I believe the GLBTA and LGBT Resource Center have not done a good job at promoting the rewards and career benefits for holding leadership positions. Maybe we need to work with career services to show these students how they can use their campus experiences on a resume or in a job interview.
Question: Use your areas where lack of learning takes place and identify them as the problems within your program and/or service.

- Response: Lack of career development for junior and senior students and a lack of recognition and promotion of how students can use their leadership opportunities for employment opportunities beyond the LGBT spectrum.
APPENDIX B
FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Focus Group General Questions:

1) For those who have visited, how do you feel about the space at the LGBT Center?
2) Do the programs and resources at the LGBT Resource Center represent your identity? Has this affected your level of involvement?
3) What programs/services would you like to see the LGBT Resource Center sponsor?
4) What suggestions do you have for strategies that would allow for LGBT Resource Center to outreach to a wider audience?
5) What LGBT Resource Center sponsored event do you like or dislike? Why?
6) What do you think are the needs of transgender students on campus?
7) What can the LGBT Resource Center do to better serve minority groups within the LGBT community (ex. Closeted students, students of color, etc.)

First Year Student Supplemental Questions:

1) What was your level of knowledge of the LGBT programs and services at USC prior to your attendance? Did you take advantage of any programs and/or services? Why/why not?
2) What are some programs that can be offered to help first year students with their transition?

Graduate/Professional Student Supplemental Questions:

1) What can the LGBT Resource Center do to better serve the graduate student population?
2) What do you think the needs are of LGBT graduate students at USC? How are their needs being met? If not, how can they be met?
3) As a graduate student, describe your satisfaction level with LGBT services on campus.

Faculty/Staff Supplemental Questions:

1) What is your satisfaction level with LGBT programs and services on campus?
2) What has been your experience with LGBT programs in the capacity of faculty and staff member?
3) What programs and services does the LGBT Resource Center provide for faculty/staff involvement?

GLBTA Supplemental Questions

1. Describe your involvement with GLBTA.
   a. How did you hear about GLBTA?
   b. Why did you decide to join the GLBTA?
   c. What keeps you involved with the GLBTA?
2. What do you think are the perceptions or stereotypes of students involved with the GLBTA?
   a. How do you think your peers not involved with GLBTA would describe the organization? Or the membership?
   b. Why do you think some students choose not to be involved with GLBTA or other LGBT organizations on campus?
3. What strategies do you think the LGBT Resource Center can utilize to help promote involvement with GLTBA and other organizations (e.g., uRap, Mentoring Program, OutReach, etc.)?
4. What has been the best/most beneficial program/service offered by the LGBT Resource Center or GLBTA?
   a. What programs and services were the least beneficial? How could they be improved?
5. What can the LGBT Resource Center do to better serve upperclassmen (e.g., junior and senior students) at USC?
FOCUS GROUP FACILITATION

Introduction
1. Facilitator
2. Education/ Professional Goals
3. Student Recorder
4. Audio Recording

Purpose
1. Assess LGBT programs/services at USC
2. Develop new initiatives/programs/services for the LGBT community at USC

Confidentiality/Guidelines
1. All information discussed will remain confidential
2. Safe environment where everyone has the right to be heard equally
3. This is not a forum for debate but rather discussion
4. Be honest and constructive

LGBT Resource Center
1. Assist student organizations with leadership development, program opportunities and collaborate with additional campus departments
2. Explain LGBT community concerns with faculty, staff and student allies through monthly discussions with campus allies
3. Offer leadership opportunities and support services like the LGBT Mentoring Program, “Generation Queer” Leadership Retreat, and Lavender Commencement Celebration
4. Network with neighboring LGBT-friendly resources

Questions/Discussion
1. Series of 6-10 questions to fuel the conversation.
2. After questions have all been answered, are there any final comments, thoughts, or information participants want to share

Wrap-Up
1. Thank participants for their feedback and honesty.
2. Give them a timeline as to when project will be completed and to look for the implementation of their ideas for next year.