

2014-2015 Associated Students

Queer Resource Center

AS Structure and Program Advisory Committee



Introduction:

The Queer Resource Center presents to the AS Structure and Program advisory Committee on January 23rd, 2015. The currently approved statement of purpose for the Queer Resource Center is:

“The Queer Resource Center (QRC) provides non-judgmental and unbiased programs, safe space, and resources to both students who identify as Queer and their allies. The QRC does this by reaching out and building community among Western students of diverse backgrounds, advocating for and educating about the Queer identity through events and resources, creating and affirming positive self-identities, networking with Queer clubs, providing peer counseling services, and addressing current issues relevant to the Queer community.”

The Queer Resource Center is home to many programs, outreach and services that empower queer students (and their allies) to receive further education on queer related topics and establish community,

Program/Services Provided:

- Resource Library
- Social Events
- Safe[r] Safe/ Peer Advising/Advocating
- Educational Events
- Queer Advocacy on Campus

Resource Library

Our resource library contains an array of books and movies that include topics such as: Queer Art and Media, Queer People of Color, Bisexuality, Young Adult, Queer History, and Being Queer in the Military. We provide students with new resources that are added to this every year so that their access to information is always updating. Students are able to check out library books for three weeks. Having this in our office, instead of the general library, allows for students to have personal feedback in books that fit their needs from someone who has a background in queer related topics and is familiar with the resources. This also provides a safe[r] space for students to check out resources with a lower chance of outing them since our office is more tucked away than the general library.

Safe[r] Space

The Queer Resource Center office promotes itself as a space where students who are Queer and in solidarity are welcome. Our office acts as a space where students needs were listened to and validated without judgment along with appropriate suggestions of options and/or resources.

Social Events

Our office offers events that center on social opportunities for Queer students to connect and meet each other. This can offer more large scale events that clubs may not be able to coordinate or financially sponsor.

Educational Events

The Queer Resource Center hosts educational events that allow for students to further a better understanding of diverse Queer identities, issues, and politics.

Queer Advocacy on Campus

Our office aims to promote queer inclusion and advocacy on campus. This can look like anything from offering inclusive language workshops to clubs, talking to staff about the importance of using pronouns, offering to be on classroom panels that discusses Queer related topics, working with Queer Safe Zone in their curriculum development, etc.

SW/COT Analysis:



Section 7: SCOT Analysis

		HELPFUL	HARMFUL
		(S) Strengths	(C) Challenges
INTERNAL	Physically: The office arguably has the best layout in the ROP, it is welcoming and comfortable and provides adequate space for people.		Events in previous year have had the capacity to be tokenizing individuals. For example in previous year they are put on a panel called “Guess the Straight Person”.
	Having three positions within the office is essential; helping with event planning, productivity and diverse areas of knowledge.		Bringing speakers in who have lens that could be harmful to students who are further marginalized within the queer community.
	A modest but workable budget which in combination with the Pride month budget meets very basic needs.		Events in the past have had a lack of representation of diverse identities, and often times prioritizing those with already privileged identities.
	We are a part of the ROP and have the opportunity to network and collaborate with other awesome and dynamic offices.		

EXTERNAL	(O) Opportunities	(T) Threats
	Opportunity to further collaborate with other ROP offices, AS Pop, and the Ethnic Student Center brings in a larger more representative audience.	Often times we have issues with how our office is branded, and people are not certain if we are a club on campus or directly connected to specific
	Opportunity to establish a database connected to the library so that books can be easier tracked and stay in the office.	
	Opportunity to establish a more efficient way to engage volunteers and set up an internship program.	

Areas for Improvements/ Recommendations:

The following are the Structure and Program Advisory committee’s recommendations for strategic goals over the next four years:

1. Explore the opportunities of expanding our physical office space and identify short-term solutions to the issue of space.

The QRC serves a variety of purposes for students including planning and facilitating events, peer advising, providing a resource library, and providing a safer space for hanging out. Despite this, we have a relatively small office. There are some hours where we have three students using all of the couch space and doing homework; unfortunately, many times while this is happening, a student will come into the office crying and seeking support, but there is not enough space to accommodate everyone and have them feel safe. This often leaves us having to ask students there to socialize to leave so that we can accommodate students in need of safe space one-on-one so they feel respected. We often advertise and promote the office as a place where students can come feel safer and hang out, but it is difficult to do so such a small space. Our current short-term solution has been to use the ROP Director’s office for one-on-one peer advising when there are other people in the office. However this creates an uncomfortable

dynamic when the ROP Director is in need of their office at the same time. This is not a permanent or effective solution.

We propose that parties involved in discussions of office space in the VU look at expanding our space to accommodate the various needs of students that the QRC serves. We appreciate the current space model of the Ethnic Student Center and CEED (Center for Education Equity and Diversity) and would want something similar. There are only two queer clubs on campus that only meet once a week, which means that the QRC is currently one of the only support systems for queer students on campus, as the administration has no permanent, full-time or equivalent staff member who queer students can go to for support or community-building. Therefore, the QRC needs a larger, more intentional, and safe space to meet student needs and help them build community amongst each other.

2. Recognize that positions in the Queer Resource Center require specific education training to queer history and contemporary issues.

One of the goals for the QRC is to provide holistic and intersectional education events. However this is operating under the assumption that people have had access to in depth theory and workshops prior to hiring. We think that is crucial to have queer specific training. Our proposal for a solutions is to provide employees with funds to either go to Gender Odyssey, “a conference focusing on the needs and interests of transgender and gender non-conforming people”, during the summer or another a local queer conference during Fall Quarter. We recommend that the office explores funding sources. This will provide employees with some content and knowledge for events they may want to plan for the rest of the year, along with an opportunity to network with potential speakers. This will be something that should be discussed and further organized as a possibility during the internship process in Spring before the employment starts. This should not be a mandated event, but something that employees will know is easily available for them as a way to gain additional knowledge about queer issues.

3. Request a \$1,300 budget increase during the AS Budget Process.

In previous years, the Queer Resource Center had charged 1 or 2 dollars at both of our “inclusive” dances, previously known as Homocoming and Pride Prom. In an effort to make these events more

inclusive to all students,, the QRC staff decided to make the dances free and therefore more financially accessible to the students we are trying to serve. Since the QRC budget includes expected revenue of three hundred dollars that we are not collecting, this results in having \$300 less available for potential for potential speakers or workshops. The issues go beyond whether someone has a dollar or two, however. Departmentally, the ROP has trended towards making educational and community-building events, often based not so much on general campus entertainment but serving a community, free to increase accessibility. It has become a marketing and accessibility issue, and the QRC dances should follow this trend.

In addition, when charging people for dances and other social events became a norm, the QRC budget was essentially lowered when funds were reallocated into revenue. It was assumed that this could cut costs by having the QRC rely on revenue generation to basically even out their budget. As the QRC (and ROP) has moved towards financial accessibility, it's become clear that counting on revenue to bolster the QRC's budget is not a long-term solution, as it also implies that the QRC must do events with revenue to have access to the most funds.

Following are attendance figures for the QRC dances over the years. However there are many variables that contribute to the number of people who attend our events.

2010-2011

- Pride Prom (300)
- Winter Mixer (30)
- End of the year Social (50)

2011-2012

- Homocoming (130)
- Pride Prom (150)

2012-2013

- Homocoming (89)
- Pride Prom (140)

2013-2014

- Homocoming (80)
- Pride Prom (115)

Our current allocated budget for speakers is \$2,200. The purpose for this fund is to bring in people that have further expertise than the

people in the office or in our local community. The majority of speakers contacted this year have had an asking price of \$3,000 to \$6,000. It has been made apparent that the Queer Resource Center's budget has been constructed in a way that makes us have to collaborate with other offices to bring in speakers. However it is harder to market why other offices should collaborate with us, when it is easy for them to argue that having a queer speaker or artist wouldn't draw a large enough audience or fit the needs of the larger student population. Having an additional \$1,000 will help assist us in our budget so that we have less dependency on other offices.

4. Explore the potential benefits and feasibility of a database for our resource library.

The QRC is given a budget of one hundred and fifty dollars per year to invest in contemporary books, movies, and/or other office supplies. However our office does not have a database that is linked to library even though the server is connected and shows books that we have in the office. If the office is not able to connect with the library's database, we propose that there is a separate database installed for people within the office to personally track where the books go. By having a database system in place the ROP offices would be able to track who has their books, be accurately connected to the library and save money by not risking books walking off the shelf with no form of penalization.

5. Continue to construct a concrete internship and/or volunteer program.

In the 2011 SPAC Recommendations they stated a request to have Lisa develop a comprehensive internship program. Often the Queer Resource Center receives a lot of students expressing interest in volunteer or internship options. However in order for this to be possible the current employees have to add additional tasks on to their work load to structure a program and then supervise people. We feel that having easier ways for volunteers and interns to be involved would add more diverse knowledge, be a positive way for people to gain experience and community, and further develop resources within the office.

6. Advocate for increased budget training and awareness for assistant coordinators.

A.S. offices are currently set up so that only coordinators are the main point person for their office's budget and have access to the most budget training. In the QRC, we have noticed that this can create dynamics in the office where the coordinator determines where all the money is spent, while other positions feel out of communication. It would better support cohesiveness within the workspace if everyone was informed about how money is spent within the office and received sufficient training to be aware of the budget processes. We understand that budget training has become more optional in the past years for assistant coordinators in the interest of making all required trainings relevant, but we recommend that salaried employees, or at least the QRC and/or ROP staff, seek to attend budget trainings and work with the coordinator to gain an understanding of how money is spent in the office and how the budget tracker works. We recognize that to maintain work flow and communication it is more effective to have one person as the budget authority, however it is important to have everyone trained in how to access and understand their office's budget.

7. Explore the options of having a more concise mission statement that better articulates our office services

The current mission statement is listed above when introducing our office in the SPAC recommendation. We are proposing small changes within the mission statement so that it better address the reality of our office and be more concise for students. Our change in mission statement is proposed as:

“The Queer Resource Center (QRC) provides non-judgmental and unbiased programs, safe[r] space, and resources to queer students. The QRC does this by building community among Western students of diverse backgrounds, advocating for and educating about queer identities through events and resources, creating and affirming positive self-identities, networking with queer clubs, providing peer advising services, and addressing current issues relevant to the queer community.”

8. Explore new branding and benefits of redesigning a logo.

The Queer Resource Center feels as though it could highly benefit from re-designing its logo in a way that better aligns with the needs of the

students. Our current logo is playing off the idea of queer being an umbrella term. We feel that the office does more than just provide an inclusive space. We would like to pursue the idea of creating a logo that markets our office that better fits our services of queer advocacy and community building.