NGLTF

LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL & TRANSGENDER CAMPUS ORGANIZING:

A COMPREHENSIVE MANUAL

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Establishing a LGBT Resource Center

By Charles Outcalt

Introduction

So your school has agreed to set up a lgbt resource center. What are you going to do with it? Winning the battle for space and funding is only the first stage in developing such a center (See Appendix A, pp 230-236 for a sample proposal). Careful planning on the most effective deployment of your resources — financial, spatial and human — is the next step.

What Are Your School's Needs?

Make sure you start with this question as you think about your long-range planning. Each campus has unique priorities, needs and resources, and what works at one school might not be appropriate for another. This chapter is not a blueprint for developing a center, but you can use it as a guide to help you identify, anticipate and fill your school's needs.

If your school is in a small town, isolated from urban centers with their bars, bookstores and coffeehouses, it may be especially import to build opportunities for socializing into your center. If your school has a large, well-established lgbt community (or communities), you might use your office as a referral and networking hub. If your school hasn't yet adopted a policy of non-discrimination against lgbt people, you could use your center as a strong voice of advocacy on lgbt issues. Of course, these emphases aren't mutually exclusive, but you need to pay careful attention to what you can do with your resources, as well as what you want to do. Listen to your communities before, during and after you act; make sure that what you do is driven by their desires and needs as much as by your own plans. Eventually, you'll find yourself striving for a balance between meeting existing needs and leading your community into the next phase of the struggle for greater lgbt community.

Embracing Diversity Within the LGBT Communities

A few (extremely important) words on diversity at your center: It will not live up to its full potential if it does not embrace the diversity that exists within the lgbt communities. It goes without saying that lesbian priorities and needs differ from those of gay men, and that members of ethnic and racial minorities are chronically under-represented in the most popular lgbt publications. If you

have any doubt on this point, flip through the nearest lgbt publication and count the number of people of color you find represented.

Never assume that any one film, lecture or magazine subscription will be equally valuable to all users of your Center. Plan activities around the goals and needs of diverse lgbt communities. A lesbian film festival, a lecture on the experience of lgbt Asian/Pacific Islanders, a workshop on African-American lgbt religious experience — all of these activities will help turn your Center into a beacon of diversity for your entire school.

Working with Other LGBT Groups on Campus

If your school has a number of lgbt groups, you'll need to be extremely sensitive about the contributions already being made by individuals in these groups. While you might be able to facilitate the work of these groups, be aware of the value and history of those individuals who were already serving the community before the arrival of the new office. Make meeting with these individuals a first priority. Learn from them. Respect them. Whatever you do, don't alienate them.

Building Coalitions with Other Under-represented Groups

Be sure to pay attention to the relationship between your center and your school's other under-represented groups. Whenever possible, be the first to extend a hand to these groups. Make sure that someone representing the center attends at least one meeting of every minority group on campus (call first to make sure your visit is included in the group's agen-

da for the meeting). Take the time to learn what other minority groups have set as their goals, then take the time to find ways to work with them on those goals. You will find the coalitions you build by working with other minority groups very helpful in establishing your center.

Another advantage of building bridges between minority groups is more subtle but just as important: If you can forge a link between your center and other under-represented groups, you'll lessen the complications and difficulties faced by students who fall into more than one minority group. To put it another way: a lesbian Chicana shouldn't have to choose between putting her energies into working with the Chicana Caucus, the Feminist Discussion Group, or the LGBT Center. If you can use your Center to network these groups together, that student won't have to channel her energies into a woman's group one day, a Chicana group the next, and your center on the third.

Setting Boundaries

If you have a paid staff, you'll need to answer some difficult questions on the extent to which the staff will socialize

If your school has a number of lgbt groups, you'll need to be extremely sensitive about the contributions already being made by individuals in these groups.

with students. You won't find the proper balance between friendliness and the maintenance of professional boundaries without some deliberation. On the one hand, the staff will probably hope to serve as a social and professional mentor

to students. On the other, students, particularly those who are in the midst of coming out, cannot be expected to know what is and is not appropriate.

It is the staff's responsibility to maintain appropriate boundaries. At a minimum, the staff should realize that all romantic/sexual interaction with students is strictly out of the question. Any social interactions that carry romantic and/or sexual connotations should be ruled out as well. Lunches on campus to continue conversations that begin in the Center might be acceptable; dinner off campus (in most cases) is not. A good model to follow is that of service-provider/client, rather than peer/peer or friend/friend. Be especially cautious regarding social situations where alcohol is served. When it comes to setting boundaries, it is far better to make the mistake of over-cautiousness.

Furnishing Your Center

If you've decided to create a social, "drop-in" space within your center, you'll probably want to equip it with comfortable furniture and, at a minimum, some lgbt publications. Not enough room in your budget for these things? That might not be a problem. Pick up the phone, write some letters, and ask for donations of furnishings, magazines, even videos. You'll be surprised at how receptive local and national lgbt magazines and newspapers are if you propose that they donate at least one subscription to your center. It won't hurt to remind the publishers that your center will be full of students, all reading what's lying around, and all trying to decide which magazines to subscribe to.

Think about displaying lgbt student art in your center. Not only will you showcase work that might not be displayed elsewhere, but you'll be creating a more welcoming atmosphere. Another idea for your walls: portraits of historical and contemporary lgbt figures. Audre Lorde, Harvey Milk, Bayard Rustin. . . . Be aware that sexually explicit images might signify lgbt liberation for some, but can be off-putting for other members of your community.

If you have created an area for socializing, you'll need to demarcate a portion of your center for "work." If you have staff, marking this boundary becomes even more important. Just as with social interactions, staff, rather than students, bear the responsibility for creating this boundary. A simple freestanding partition might be enough to subtly but effectively separate staff work space from student lounging space.

Reading and Research Materials

If your center will act as a repository for lgbt reading and research materials on campus, you might approach any local bookstores with good lgbt stocks to ask them for donations. When dealing with local merchants, you should remind them that students are very good consumers, adding an offer to post a small sign within the center acknowledging the merchant's generosity if they donate to your center. If you have the budget to buy all the books you need, try to secure donations anyway, and put the money toward something you will need to pay for, such as renting a first-release lgbt film to show on campus.

Before you select your books, take an afternoon to find out what's available already at your school's library. Be sure you check to make sure that what's listed in the library catalog is actually on the shelf: chances are many lgbt publications have been stolen, either by people coming out and too shy to actually check them out, or by those who feel that lgbt publications should not be tolerated in academic libraries. You'll probably want to focus on "hands-on" lgbt materials: coming out books, lgbt legal guides, etc. As useful as these books are, they are often the hardest to find in academic libraries.

Don't neglect diversity in your reading materials. While many lgbt bookstores might concentrate primarily on the white gay male experience, your Center shouldn't. Publications in languages other than English are highly appropriate. While you might be able to assume that students on your campus are comfortable speaking in English, many students' families, par-

ticularly their parents, might be more familiar with another language.

Appendix B, pp 237-238 contains a suggested list of lgbt publications to have on hand, including a few in Spanish. You could buy everything on this list for about $500.00, or you could use volunteer labor to ask for donations from local bookstores. After you've finalized your list, you might present a copy of it to your library's acquisitions department, sug-

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gesting that they use it build their lgbt collection. Two campus copies of any of these books is certainly not too many!

Another excellent source for lgbt reading materials is your own school's student body. Chances are, students at your school are doing some sort of LGBT/Queer Theory work. Get in touch with lgbt students in the English, history, theology, psychology, literary theory departments and find out what they and their colleagues are working on. Don't neglect other departments you might not think of as likely homes to LGBT/Queer Theory work, such as architecture, public health, and the life sciences. Much excellent student work is lost each year simply because no one collects and protects it. Dedicate a drawer in a filing cabinet, line up a volunteer, put out the word, and you'll have an archive of lgbt/Queer Theory work that will only appreciate in value over time.

Paying Attention to the Administration

Be sure you listen to your school's administration on their priorities for the center. You might have a better awareness than the administration does of the true needs of the lgbt communities on your campus. Even so, it only makes sense to ensure continued funding for the center by taking the administration's goals into your planning process. A center that goes its own way and antagonizes the administration might have an exciting year or two, but chances are it won't be around to serve the lgbt communities much longer than that. In the example that follows, continued funding for the center was contingent on demonstrating a lack of adequate services for the lgbt communities. Accordingly, the center's director made compiling a comprehensive list of existing services, with inadequacies clearly noted, a top priority. Another school might tie center funding to the creation of a social "safe space" for all lesbians, gay men and bisexuals on campus. In this case, you'd want to do all you could to make the center known, accessible and useful to all members of your lgbt communities.
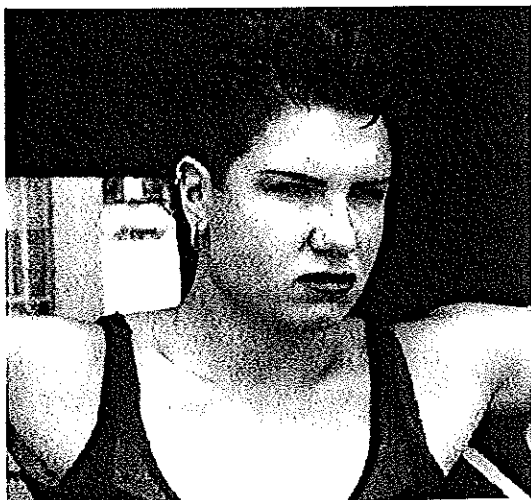
Photo © 1995 Karen Creitz

Developing and Running an LGBT Resources Office: A Comprehensive Checklist

In the spring of 1995, UCLA opened its LGBT Student Resources Office. At that time, UCLA already had several faculty/staff lgbt organizations, as well as at least a dozen student groups. That was the good news; the bad was that these groups didn't always talk to one another. In many cases, especially among the students, people in lgbt groups didn't even realize that similar groups existed. Inevitably, knowledge of services for lgbt students was fragmented across the many communities that form UCLA.

The Resources Office was created as a hub for lgbt life on campus. Rather than providing services directly to students, the Resources Office became an information clearing house for referrals to the services and programs already available on campus and in the diverse (but often fragmented) communities of the city of Los Angeles.

Within weeks of hiring its first director, UCLA's Resources Office had at least 25 student visitors and twice as many phone calls per week. The Resources Office became so popular with students that a staff of eight interns and several regular volunteers developed spontaneously within the first month the doors were open.

Below is a checklist of the duties the staff and volunteers in UCLA's Resources Office took on in their first few months. This checklist is organized into those tasks the Resources Office staff felt were top priorities.

Remember, you may not want or need to do everything listed here. Following each task outlined below is a short analysis of ways you might adapt UCLA's experience to better serve your needs. We hope that the following pages can be a springboard for planning the development of your office.

Assess Currently Available Resources for the Campus LGBT-Community and Identify Gaps in these Resources

Goal:
To develop information regarding the current status of resources for and sensitivity to the needs of the Campus lgbt community.

▼ Meet with student service providers, including:

Career Planning

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Student Affairs Director or Chancellor for Student Affairs

Dean of Students

Student Programming Center

Office of Residential Life

Student Psychological Services

Minority Student Centers

Women's Resource Center

Office for Students with Disabilities

Student Health Service

HIV educational services; and

▼ Develop annotated lgbt resource list from data gathered at these meetings, with emphasis on services now available, but with adequate attention to those areas in which service/sensitivity could be improved.

Discussion:
Be extremely sensitive when approaching student service providers. While it might be obvious to you that lgbt services on campus could be enhanced, you'll get longer-lasting improvements faster if you take a diplomatic approach. In particular, don't imply to service providers that you know their job better than they do. Remind service providers that you are attempting to bring them a new perspective on a community in which they might not have an insider's knowledge.

At the same time, be wary of the "we serve all students equally well" trap. Don't hesitate to enumerate the unique

needs of lgbt students. For example, "serving all students equally" might mean, to a health services worker, that all women should be asked about birth control methods. Obviously, lesbians need different questions during their gynecological exams. Make sure you communicate these particular needs to service providers.

Assess the Experience and Needs of Campus LGBT Students

Goal:
To develop information on the experience, needs and hopes of lgbt students to better provide resources to meet lgbt student needs; and to build mechanisms for lgbt students to make their unique contributions to the school and the wider community.

▼ Insert relevant questions on Campus lgbt experience and needs into campus-wide survey;

▼ Analyze and develop means of acting on data gathered from campus-wide survey; and
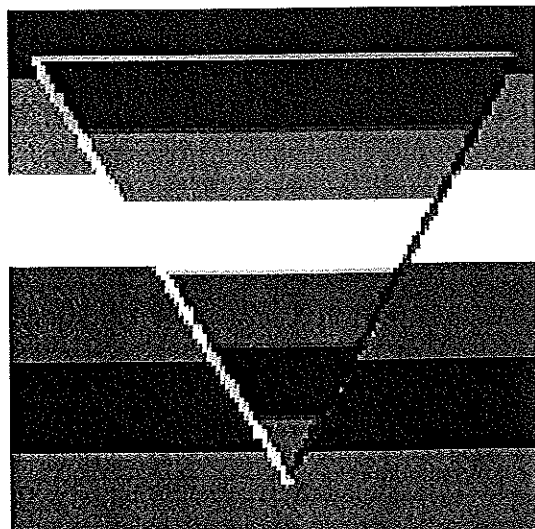
▼ Collect anecdotal reports from student outreach efforts.

Discussion:
Not all schools undertake campus-wide surveys with regularity. Even those which do perform regular surveys might not be willing to insert questions on lgbt student experience. If you don't have access to a campus-wide survey, you might turn to the graduate departments of education, statistics or sociology to discuss commissioning a survey on campus lgbt life. Perhaps you could arrange for academic or internship credit for the students who work with you on this survey. Even if a campus-wide survey is not available to you, you can still collect individual, anecdotal reports of campus life. Go to student lgbt groups; encourage students to meet with your Center's staff. Be as aggressive as possible in assessing the quality of lgbt life on your campus.

Outreach to/Working with Campus LGBT Students

Goal:
To form mutually beneficial links between the Resources Office and lgbt students, and between diverse elements of the lgbt community, both students and non-students. Ultimate goals: to contribute to the integration of the lgbt student community with the wider campus community, to the benefit of each; to promote diversity within the lgbt student community; and to foster internal cohesion within the lgbt student community.

▼ Attend lgbt student meetings;

▼ Be available, through posted hours and by appointment, to students for one-on-one meetings;

▼ Host a "Town Hall," possibly with a student group as co-host, to solicit campus, particularly student, input on the Resources Office's activities, potential, and place within the university; and

▼ Develop strategies for publicizing Resources Office, including:

Electronic resources: lgbt e-mail server and World Wide Web (WWW) pages

Campus newspaper and radio

Paid advertising

Discussion:
Obviously, your outreach efforts must be customized to your campus. Still, a few principles should always hold true: Face-to-face meetings, although extremely time consuming, are invaluable in establishing a Resource Office's presence on campus. Be available every day at regular times. Publicize these times in as many ways as you can, then make sure your Center maintains them. Nothing will discourage students faster than coming to an closed Center they had been told would be open. For greatest accessibility, stagger these office hours (e.g., early morning, lunch-time, early evening). One or two campus-wide "Town Hall" meetings can be very useful in gathering input, raising the profile of the Resources Office, and fostering a sense of community.

As valuable as office hours and Town Hall meetings are, you shouldn't expect students to come to you. Get out to their groups and introduce the Office to them. In the early stages of a Resources Office, it's important to use your feet to get out to the lgbt communities on your campus.

Many campuses have discovered that an e-mail list server is a tremendous resource for connecting lgbt students, faculty and staff. There's no better way to reach as many people, both out and relatively closeted, with as little effort. Be aware, though, that many students do not have e-mail. Consistency is important in maintaining the credibility and usefulness of an e-mail news service: just as with office hours, it can be harmful to offer only sporadic service. If you can't commit to maintaining an e-mail news service, consider holding off until you

> *Be available every day at regular times. Publicize these times in as many ways as you can, then make sure your Center maintains them. Nothing will discourage students faster than coming to an closed Center they had been told would be open.*

have the hardware and person power to keep it running regularly.

Utilize Office Space as a Drop-In and Walk-By Informational Resource

Goal:
To create an approachable, consistently staffed office space with informational resources for the campus lgbt community.

▼ Develop informational resources of interest to the Campus lgbt community through active data gathering

efforts, such as the retrieval, and in some cases, creation of, flyers, brochures, etc., on lgbt resources available both on campus and in the wider community. Include information on:

▼ Health resources, with particular emphasis on lesbian health issues and HIV services, especially information from Student Health Services and the wider community: city- or region-wide service providers;

▼ Psychological services, from Student Psychological Services and the wider community (many students might feel trepidation at coming out or dealing with lgbt issues on campus);

▼ Anti-Violence/Victim Recovery Services;

▼ Academic resources;

▼ Career planning services; and

▼ Social/networking opportunities.

▼ Hold regular office hours and be available through appointments to guide access to these informational resources;

▼ Provide "passive" informational resources, available at all hours and to students at all levels of comfort with self-identification as gay, lesbian bisexual, through the use of bulletin boards and flyers outside the office; and

▼ Develop electronic means of disseminating these information resources, possibly through the creation of a series of WWW pages.

Discussion:
Be creative and aggressive in collecting and distributing information. Make sure you meet with all relevant campus service providers at least once. Your referrals will be much more effective if they're based on personal knowledge. Once again, use your feet.

Don't assume that only those services that are clearly marked "lesbian" or "gay" or "bisexual" will be useful for your visitors. For example, substance abuse can be a tremendous problem for the lgbt student community, and so you should make sure you have resources available to meet the needs of those with substance abuse issues.

Make your information available in the Center, but make sure that you've got a good selection of flyers, brochures, etc., hanging outside the Center, too. Many students, especially those most in the closet, might not be comfortable coming into the Center and meeting with a staff person, but they might be able to walk by the Center after hours and pore over a bulletin board. Make sure you keep a back-up copy of everything on the board, and don't assume vandalism if flyers regularly disappear; you might just be reaching members of the community who can only walk by and grab information to read it in private.

If you have use of computers, an Internet account, and access to someone with 'Net expertise, you might think about creating a series of WWW pages to describe your Center and your school's lgbt resources. WWW pages can be great links to other lgbt resources, as well. Pages and addresses come and go, but the Internet allows complete access to information in complete privacy—which can be a very

powerful combination for those who struggling to come out. Of course, you must always be aware that not all members of your community will have access to a computer and Internet account. Make sure that not all of your information distribution energy goes into the 'Net!
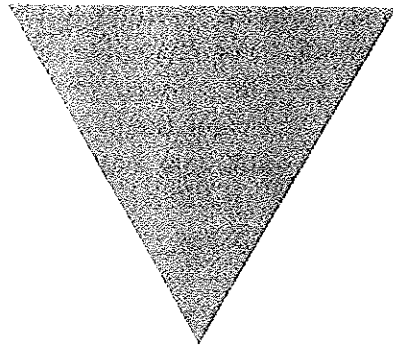
Coordination/Development of Resources and Activities

Goal:
Assist pre-existing campus lgbt organizations in the coordination and development of resources and activities. Provide resources and activities in those cases in which they are not otherwise available.

▼ Assist students and student groups in their activities;

▼ Provide role-model speakers for rap groups, with an emphasis on professional role models of color;

▼ Advise undergraduate student groups by providing support for administration of student groups and meeting with student group leaders on a regular basis;

▼ Train student group leaders and rap group facilitators as needed;

▼ Cultivate younger students to assume leadership positions;

▼ Assist student groups in developing stronger relationship with Gay/Lesbian Alumni, including arranging for Alumni representation at GALA meetings and rap sessions, working with Alumni and GALA to develop Alumni Council of Advisors for undergraduate student groups and exploring greater funding of student groups by Alumni Coordinate production of campus lgbt brochures;

▼ Offer opportunities for volunteer work and internships in the lgbt Center and with community-based lgbt organizations;

▼ Offer opportunities for lgbt faculty and staff to mentor students;

▼ Co-host on-campus lgbt political events;

▼ Provide training in awareness of and sensitivity to lgbt issues for Campus staff, including information for Human Resources to distribute to new hires, training for those staff who offer services directly to students, including Residence Hall and Health and Mental Health Services Staff;

▼ Cooperate with undergraduate student group to maintain a speakers bureau to address other campus organizations on lgbt issues; and

▼ Develop means of assisting students in responding to political events through

letter-writing, in cooperation with local lgbt political agencies and centers.

Discussion:

Clearly, your level of support for other lgbt organizations on your campus will vary with the needs of these groups. The above guidelines were written with long-standing but somewhat inactive student groups (largely social and "rap" groups) in mind. These groups had some difficulty in meeting the administrative requirements of maintaining a continuous campus presence, and so it was appropriate for the Center to offer organizational support. If your student groups are similarly "organizationally challenged," do what you can to get them back on their feet, but be careful that you don't sap anyone's initiative by imposing your ideas and agenda unnecessarily. Your best role might be to stay in the background, doing as much grunt work as possible while you let students take the credit for what might be in actuality your successes. Often, the process can be more important than the result, especially with such a critical process – training students to become leaders and take responsibility – at work.

Work in Concert/Coordination with Other Campus LGBT Groups and Networks

Goal:

To assist in coordination of activities of and information regarding other lgbt entities.

▼ On campus, by providing "umbrella coordination" of information regarding campus lgbt entities and activities, including student, faculty, staff and alumni/ae groups; and

▼ Outside Campus, by working with other Resource Centers locally and nationally, by maintaining close ties with local and national lgbt organizations, and by participating in lgbt conferences

Discussion:

Again, these guidelines will be appropriate for some campuses and not as relevant for others. The above activities were undertaken on a campus with fairly specialized groups already in place: faculty, staff, students and alumni/ae all had their own groups. In this situation, the Center can take a lead role in tying these groups together.

Cross-pollination can be highly rewarding for all sides of the exchange. For
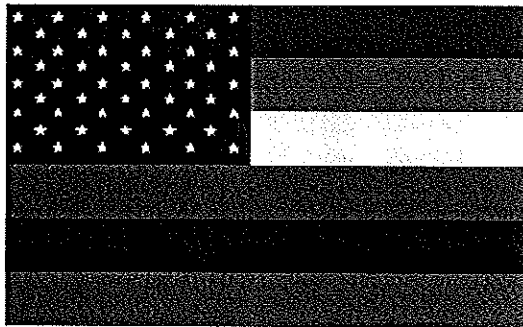
example, if you can develop a collaborative relationship between your lgbt Alumni/ae group and your undergraduate student groups, you will not only provide the students with role models, but you will quite possibly add a new purposefulness and integration into campus affairs to the alumni/ae. (One caution: do be careful when mixing alumni/ae, particularly those who might be recently out of school, and younger undergraduates. Professional relationships, such as mentorships and advisory councils, are very productive. Social gatherings, particularly those which feature alcohol, can be quite dangerous, as they can set the scene

for the development of inappropriate and sometimes exploitative relationships.)

Your best role might be to stay in the background, doing as much grunt work as possible while you let students take the credit for what might be in actuality your successes. Often, the process can be more important than the result, especially with such a critical process – training students to become leaders and take responsibility – at work.

Off-campus lgbt connections can be extremely useful. Many lgbt center staff members feel a lack of peer support in their work. There might be other, somewhat similar centers on campus, maybe even with similar missions. However, most lgbt center staff are the only campus professionals specifically charged with service to the lgbt community. If you would like to share the experience of others who have been in your position, be sure to reach out to your peers around the country.

Outreach to Campus non-LGBT Community

Goals:
To promote the integration of the Campus lgbt community with the non-lgbt community to the benefit of both communities; to form alliances with other minority communities so as to lessen the difficulties of simultaneous membership in more than one minority community.

▼ Foster alliances with other minority organizations on campus.

Discussion:

If you're going to do anything useful or productive with your center, start here. Find out what other minority student groups and centers exist on your campus. Find out what their goals are, and find out what you can do to help them reach them. You might have to take the first step in reaching out, especially if your center is new. You might have to go back to the same people more than once to build up trust. Do it. Coalition building might be the single most important thing you can do with your center.

There's an extra value in coalition building that you might not even be aware of as you begin the process: very few of your students will fall into just one minority group. A Latina lesbian shouldn't have to decide whether she will foreground her Latina identity, her status as a woman, or her lesbianism. By building bridges between these groups, you are lessening the divisiveness and complications faced day and day out by students who are members of more than one minority group.

Non-Academic, Non-Campus Outreach

Goal:
To form links between lgbt students and the non-Campus, non-academic lgbt community so as to provide a mutual exchange for energy and resources. Ultimate goal: to prepare Campus lgbt students for productive roles within wider lgbt community.

▼ General/Political lgbt. Work with city-wide and national lgbt agencies to co-host academic forums, AIDS memorials, social events, etc.

▼ Develop internship programs with city-wide and national lgbt agencies; and

▼ Introduce Resources Office to the general lgbt community (with particular emphasis on lgbt political figures, non-Campus lgbt academic figures and leadership of minority lgbt organizations) through Open House soon after center's opening.

Discussion:

Once again, the above guidelines are written for a particular situation: a center housed in a large, diverse university located in a major metropolitan area. You may not have 15 or 20 city-wide and national lgbt organizations with whom to cooperate as you think about co-hosting academic forums, placing interns, etc. If you don't have these community resources, be creative in thinking about who your allies in the community might be. Is there a women's center in your city? What about progressive religious congregations? Alternative bookstores? Even if you can't work with the local chapter of a well-known lgbt organization on a day-to-day basis, you can still develop excellent cooperative relationships with allies in your area. These relationships can be instrumental in helping your center reach its goals. What's more, they can be excellent opportunities for your student interns to develop professionally in an atmosphere in which their lgbt status is not only accepted by positively valued.
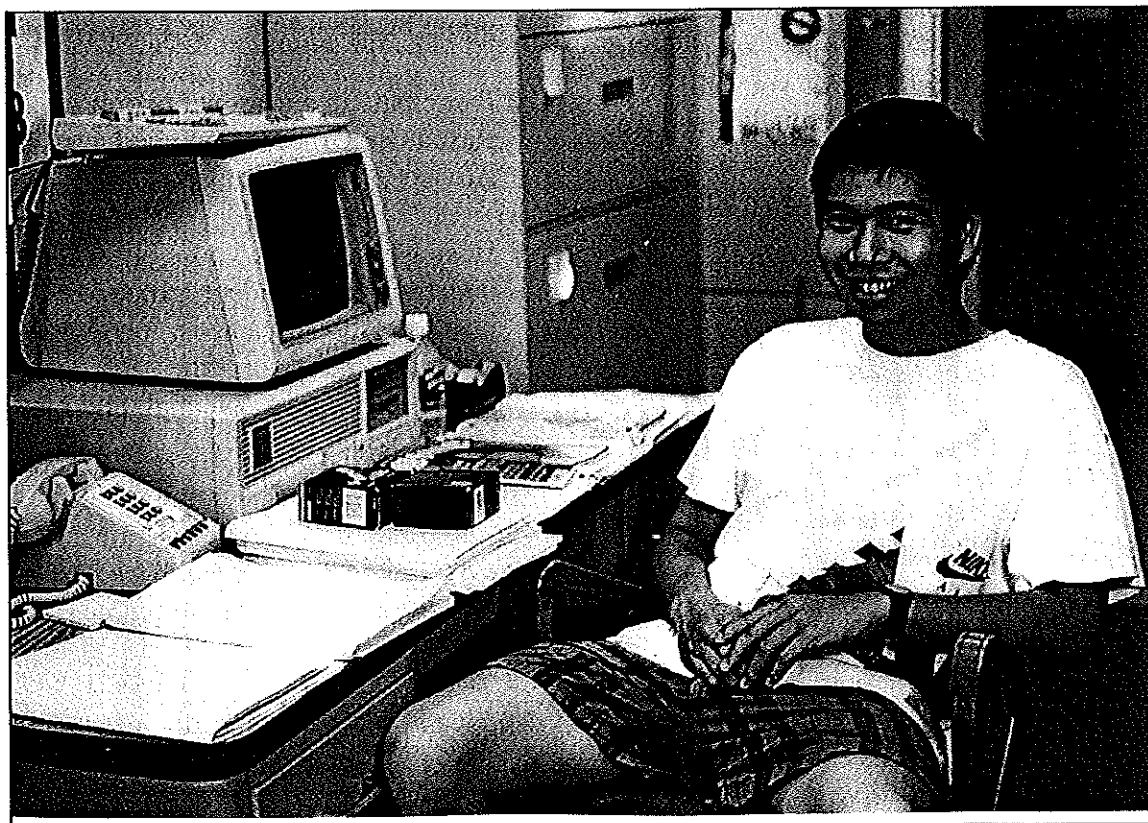

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Fundraising

Goal:
To explore means of augmenting the Resource Office's budget.

▼ Discuss fundraising techniques and successes with other Resource Office Directors, such as the Women's Resources Center; and

▼ Explore support from the lgbt Alumni/ae group and the wider lgbt community.

Discussion:
Once again, cooperation is the best policy. Make sure you work with other campus lgbt organizations and networks. Not only will you see what's worked for them and what hasn't, but you might have a chance to meet with their donors and supporters. You should offer to work in close cooperation with your school's development office. This cooperative relationship will not only keep your administration happy, but you will find that development professionals can give you valuable advice on how to approach potential donors, how to make your pitch,

> *Be creative in thinking about who your allies in the community might be. Is there a women's center in your city? What about progressive religious congregations? Alternative bookstores?*

and how to go back for further funding on a regular basis.
If you find yourself approaching potential donors and supporters directly, you'll find that pitches aimed at a particular purpose will be the most effective. Specify,

specify, specify. Rather than asking for funding to build resources in the office, ask for money for books. Rather than asking for money for books, present your donors with a list of titles you would like to acquire for the center. (The list in Appendix B, pp 237-238, is a good place to start.)

Advisory Structure for Resources Office

Goal:
To create and sustain a mechanism through which the Campus lgbt community, as well as the wider lgbt community, can offer guidance and suggestions for the Resources Office.

▼ Institute an Advisory Committee comprised of representatives from all Campus lgbt constituencies: students, faculty, staff, alumni/ae. Work with this Advisory Committee on an ongoing basis;

▼ Participate in a year-end review of the Resources Office, to be conducted by Advisory Committee; and

▼ Host a "Town Hall," possibly with the undergraduate student group as co-host, to solicit campus, particularly student, input on the Resources Office's activities, potential, and place within the university.

Discussion:
Listen, listen, listen. Ask questions about how you're doing. Get feedback. If you don't hear any negative comments, ask more questions.

You can't be all things to all people. Many lgbt center staff have found that expectations have been building for their center for so long that at least a few peo-

ple will be disappointed with the reality of the center once it's established. Don't be personally discouraged if you learn you're not pleasing everyone, but do make an effort to include in your planning those who do not feel they are being served adequately. If someone has a complaint, then "How can we work together to take care of this problem?" is a much more productive answer than "But I tried," or "But I didn't know that's what you needed."

Questions and Answers Regarding Opening and Running a Successful Resource Center

The following questions and answers might be useful in trouble-shooting any difficulties you might encounter as you strive to adapt your Resources Center to the needs of your campus communities. Again, the answers provided might be most directly applicable to a Resources Center located on a large urban campus; please tailor them to fit your needs.

Q: How can we be sure our center is open and useful to all members of our campus lgbt communities?

A: Don't overlook the basics here. Is there enough foot traffic around your center to ensure that students will see it? On the other hand, is it in so public a space that some closeted students would feel uncomfortable being seen entering? There's a delicate balance between easy to find and too public. Make sure that your center is easily accessible to all members of the community. Where's the nearest elevator? Are there ramps for the disabled? Keep your hours accessible, too. As outlined above, post and stick to regular office hours. People won't come

if they're afraid you'll be closed when they get there.

There's another question of accessibility that's often forgotten – take a look around your center. Do you see sexually explicit photos which might make some students uncomfortable? Remember, what's liberation to some is exploitation to others.

Once you've made sure your center is at least accessible, you can think about how to make it inviting. Take another look around. Any photos of people of color? A good mix of representations of men and women? Make sure your center reflects the diversity of our communities. lgbt bookstores in bigger (and sometimes smaller) cities will have a good selection of posters, etc., featuring lgbt people of color.

Finally, make sure you can provide the resources lgbt students need. Your center might be the only place for miles around that students can find lgbt publications. Just as importantly, it might be the only place they feel comfortable reading them. Stock up on magazines (again, remembering the tremendous diversity of our community). Make sure you've got a comfortable sofa or set of chairs for people to use while they read them. And don't overlook how far a few simple "homey" gestures, such as a plant or a bowl of fruit, can go toward making students feel welcome.

Never forget that your center might be the only place students can act like themselves.

Q: We have the same faces at every meeting. Where can we find more members?

A: What do those faces have in common? Are all the faces you see of the same ethnic group? Are they all men, or all women? If so, you should make sure you're offering a meeting of interest to the people who are not coming—either restructure the meetings you have now to include an emphasis on those who are not represented (and make sure you publicize these changes), or call a meeting just for the groups to whom you'd like to make outreach.

Q: Our campus has a gay men's group, a lesbian group, and a few People of Color lgbt groups. Each professional school has its own group, and then there are some groups meeting that we don't even know anything about. How can we bring everyone together?

A: This question has two very different answers. **Answer 1:** Your center is a natural place to try to bring everyone together. Get out, meet with the People of Color, lesbian, and other lgbt groups. Invite them all to a common meeting so that they can meet one another. This won't be easy— good meetings require solid preparation as much as admirable intentions. Check with each group to find a good meeting time for everyone, make sure your meeting is publicized and, above all, make sure you give each group you've invited a chance to contribute to the agenda. **Answer 2:** Maybe you won't be able to bring everyone together. If your campus has already developed several separate lgbt groups, respect the intent of those groups and their members and realize that different elements of the lgbt community have dif-

ferent goals, priorities, needs and even styles. Sometimes you'll have to accept that the center can be a conduit of information between different groups, rather than a means of bringing all groups together.

You can't be all things to all people. Many lgbt center staff have found that expectations have been building for their center for so long that at least a few people will be disappointed with the reality of the center once it's established.

Q: Even though we have a large campus, almost no one comes to our lgbt student group meetings. What should we do?

A: Make sure that your meetings are perceived as "safe space." You might require complete confidentiality of all meeting participants. Ask that they not discuss the meeting or anything that happens in it outside the meeting itself. Remind participants that not everyone who comes to the meeting is equally "out," and that no one should be inadvertently outed by another member by casual references to the meeting in other contexts. It's a good idea to remind meeting participants of these guidelines at the beginning and ending of each meeting.

It's possible that students are not comfortable meeting in what's known as a "gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender" space. Rather than posting meeting times and places, list a phone number to call for more information on your publicity. Ask that would-be participants call this num-

ber to find out when and where the next lgbt student meeting will be. Hold this meeting off-campus, away from the center. You might be surprised at the number of new faces who show up. Expect things to build slowly, though, and give your meetings time to develop. You might need to meet at the same place and time for weeks before some students feel comfortable actually coming to the meetings.

Q: Our volunteers don't keep to their scheduled hours. This makes it hard to get anything done. Sometimes we even feel that volunteers are more trouble than they're worth. Any advice?

A: What are you asking your volunteers to do? Certainly, the envelopes need to be stuffed, the shelves need to be dusted and someone's got to dump the recycled paper into the bin. Make sure, though, that you offer volunteers more interesting tasks along with these mundane chores. Presume intelligence, initiative and follow-through on the part of your volunteers, and you're likely to get it. Assign as much responsibility as volunteers are ready to assume. Sometimes you'll be disappointed and will need to pick up the slack, but you'll be surprised at how many volunteers you get, not to mention how much work they do, if you treat them as equals rather than as helpers.

PROPOSAL FOR A LESBIAN AND GAY
COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTER

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THE CHALLENGE

The rapidly changing demographic profile of Southern California presents some unique challenges for the University of California, Los Angeles. Because of its stature as a world-class research university and owing to the broad cultural and ethnic diversity that characterizes its campus community, UCLA is well situated to become a role model for other communities grappling with issues of diversity, acceptance, and pluralism.

In characteristic fashion, UCLA is rising to these challenges, demonstrating — in both words and deeds—a commitment to creating a campus environment that not only tolerates but celebrates UCLA's rich diversity. Through both curricular and extracurricular approaches for students and through special educational programs designed for faculty and staff, individuals at UCLA are learning to respect and appreciate the ways in which they differ from one another.

Until now, UCLA's efforts to promote pluralistic values within the campus community have focused primarily on race and ethnicity. Only occasionally has the dialogue been expanded to include other diverse sub-populations. In particular, the issues and concerns of UCLA's lesbian and gay community are consistently relegated to a comparatively minor position on the University's diversity agenda. Nevertheless, UCLA is in a position to exercise its characteristic leadership in creating a model campus community in which all manner of differences, including differences in sexual orientation, are esteemed.

UCLA Campus Climate for Lesbians and Gay Men

UCLA supports a number of organizations that respond directly to the needs and interests of lesbians and gay men on campus. At the same time, a number of anti-gay incidents point to the need for continued efforts to develop a campus climate supportive of lesbians and gay men.

On the positive side, the institutional support for Ten Percent, the campus lesbian and gay quarterly newspaper, the Gay and Lesbian Association (GALA), an undergraduate student organization, and other lesbian and gay campus groups indicate that UCLA is aware that lesbians and gay men have specific concerns and is relatively supportive of efforts to address them. Additionally, Student Psychological Services and Student Health Services offer a number of programs that address, both directly and indirectly, the needs of the campus gay, lesbian, and bisexual communities. Notable among these are the Men's Health Clinic, which is involved in a variety of HIV-related physical and mental health issues, the Kaleidoscope Theater troupe, which uses theater to encourage safer sex practices among heterosexual and homosexual students, and Rap Groups, which provide support for individuals on campus who are dealing with "coming out," relationships, and HIV-related concerns. Further, the recent formulation of both a lesbian and gay faculty/staff organization and a lesbian and gay alumni association may be regarded as positive steps toward ensuring that UCLA is a safe, hospitable environment for the lesbian and gay individuals who study, teach, and work on the campus.

Despite the existence of these structural and organizational support mechanisms, members of UCLA's lesbian and gay community have experienced many of the same difficulties described by individuals on other, arguably less supportive, campuses. Specifically, several recent events involving gay, and lesbian UCLA students — harassment of a group of lesbian students at a UCLA football game; a

bomb threat at the offices of Ten Percent; and telephone threats of violence against GALA — suggest that UCLA is not immune to hate-motivated acts of violence against the non-heterosexual campus population. In addition, substantial anecdotal evidence collected through informal interviews suggests that homophobic attitudes, expressed through jokes, comments, and graffiti pervade the student body. These incidents and attitudes (along with the ongoing public debate they have generated in the campus media) must be considered within the national societal context, documented in yearly reports by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF), in which hate-motivated crimes against homosexuals are on the rise (Berrill, 1990).

For dramatic reasons such as these, and for other reasons that are far more subtle, many gay men and lesbians find themselves unable or unwilling to "come out of the closet — to be themselves — at UCLA. The college years are a time during which many students explore and/or come to terms with their sexuality. For students who are not heterosexual or who are in the process of discovering their homosexuality, college can be a particularly painful time. At UCLA, gay, lesbian, and bisexual students are more likely than their heterosexual counterparts to report feelings of loneliness (Shepard, 1990), a finding that corroborates findings from other campuses around the country.

Loneliness, discomfort, and fear are not the exclusive domain of non-heterosexual students at UCLA. It is with a palpable sense of relief that many UCLA faculty and staff join the Gay and Lesbian Faculty/Staff Network. The relief comes from having found a place on campus where they can let down their guard and be who they are. Inevitably they come to their first meetings armed with emotional accounts of the isolation and feelings of anxiety they have experienced on the campus. Some describe specific incidents of harassment and/or discrimination that they have either witnessed or encountered directly. Faculty members, particularly junior, non-tenured faculty, have been slower to join the Network because of the perceived negative effect that revealing their homosexuality might have on their chance for tenure, a fear that persists despite UCLA's non-discrimination policy.

Compelling and poignant as many of these personal accounts are, they come from individuals who have somehow found the strength and courage to emerge from the closet and share them. Even more compelling and poignant to many lesbian and gay campus leaders are the unknown stories of those who are too fearful to come forward and seek support. Of particular concern are those anonymous individuals — primarily students — who are just "coming out" or just beginning to question and explore their sexuality.

It is these individuals who are most in need of guidance and support. They need to see lesbians and gay men in positions of authority and responsibility, they need role models and mentors. Further, it must be demonstrated to them that the positive consequences of coming out of the closet are many and that the negative consequences are few. Finally, it must be demonstrated to them (and to the entire campus community) that one's sexual orientation has virtually no bearing on his or her ability to learn, to teach, to counsel and advise students, to conduct research, to perform administrative tasks, to be leaders, and to be promoted to higher ranks within the institution.

UCLA is in a position to uphold its tradition of leadership in issues of diversity, acceptance, and pluralism by instituting policies and programs specifically designed to improve the quality of campus life for the many non-heterosexual individuals who come here to study, teach, and work. A successful

strategy for making this happen, regardless of the form it takes or the means chosen for implementation, should contain the following elements:

1. A clear message from UCLA indicating that it values the lesbian and gay members of its campus community;

2. A physical location ("safe place") that is "lesbian and gay-positive," a place in which students, faculty, and staff may be comfortable, regardless of their sexual orientation, cultural background, or ethnic heritage;

3. A clearinghouse for resources and materials to educate the campus about sexual differences and the lives of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and other sexual minorities;

4. Mechanisms for disseminating resource materials and other information, both among members of the non-heterosexual community and to the campus at large;

5. Opportunities for peer and professional counseling, advising, and referral for students, faculty, and staff who are dealing with issues related to sexual orientation; and

6. Opportunities for role-modeling and mentoring.

One program idea that encompasses these essential elements involves the establishment of an office or center which (1) provides support services to lesbian and gay students, faculty, and staff; (2) offers assistance to campus individuals who are questioning or struggling with their sexual identity; and (3) educates the campus community about the lives, issues, and concerns of the non-heterosexual population. Offices and centers designed to address matters of concern to sexual minorities have proven successful on other university campuses.

Other Campus Approaches

Recently, the President's Select Committee for Lesbian and Gay Concerns at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, released a report entitled "In Every Classroom," which includes findings from a national survey of college and university programs for sexual minorities. Among the various campus policies and programs described in the report are descriptions of offices/resource centers for gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals at three major universities: University of Massachusetts at Amherst, University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, and University of Pennsylvania. These descriptions, which suggest some ways in which such an office or center might function at UCLA, are provided in Appendix A of this document.

A STRATEGY

It is the strong belief of members the Chancellor's Advisory Committee on the Gay and Lesbian Community, the faculty-staff Network, GALA, and other campus groups that the best way to address the concerns described above is through the establishment of a Lesbian and Gay Community Resource Center, to be located somewhere on campus. Such a center would be designed to meet the special needs and interests of a campus population that is ethnically, culturally and sexually diverse. It is pro-

posed that this center be approved initially as a three-year "pilot program." Ideally, the center would be characterized by the following attributes and functions:

- A physical location (totaling approximately 500 square feet) that includes four distinct spaces: a reception area with shelves to contain resource materials (100 square feet), a meeting room that can accommodate up to 20 people (200 square feet), and private offices conducive to confidential counseling and advising for two professional staff members (100 square feet each). The space would most likely be administratively located in Student Affairs in a facility that is accessible during the evening hours;

- Two professional FTE at the Senior Administrative Analyst level (one male and one female), preferably with experience in student affairs areas and/or lesbian/gay-related social service. Administrative support to be provided by student work/study clerk(s);

- Counseling and referral services related primarily to "coming out" issues, "safer sex" and other physical and mental health-related matters, and extracurricular and community service opportunities, both on and off campus. The Center would not attempt to usurp or duplicate other campus counseling and advising services but would function as a "point of entry" to appropriate offices, individuals, and resources;

- Advising of GALA and other student groups in conjunction with advisors in the Center for Student Programming; Community Education and Outreach, including participation in orientation programs for new students and staff; training programs for orientation and residence hall student staff members, UCPD, Student Health, and other campus units; and the development of a speaker's bureau;

- "Umbrella coordination of campus lesbian and gay organizations (a partial list of these organizations appears is Appendix B);

- Networking and information-sharing with other campuses in California and across the country,

- "Home base" for the cultivation of role-modeling and mentoring opportunities involving students, faculty, and staff. Includes coordination of staff/faculty volunteers who will have a regularly scheduled presence in the Center. It is requested that staff who wish to volunteer be provided with up to two hours per week of release time to enable them to do so;

- Sensitivity to people of color interests and concerns in such areas as outreach, service delivery, and representation and visibility on paid and/or volunteer staff;

- Reporting and referral center for victims of anti-lesbian/anti-gay harassment or violence; and. Program review at the end of each year.

An advisory committee or governing board will be established to monitor policies, programs and activities associated with the Resource Center. This body will be made up of diverse individuals representing students (undergraduate and graduate), faculty, staff, and the broader (non-UCLA) community.

Funding

Although the Student Affairs organization is the most likely administrative home for such a center, student fee funds may be used only for student services and programs. Because this proposed resource center is designed to serve the needs and interests of faculty and staff as well as students, funding for the Center should come from a variety of sources, including but not limited to student fee monies.

GAY AND LESBIAN RESOURCE CENTER

Suggested Budget

Description	Expense
Senior Admin Analyst (2 FTE @ 3000/mo.)	72,000.00
Work/Study Clerks @ 7.80/hr X .35 X 400 hrs	1,092.00
Benefits	20,300.00
Advertising and promotion	4,000.00
Computing supplies	300.00
Furniture	
bulletin board	300.00
3 metal desks	450.00
3 desk chairs	600.00
meeting table	200.00
20 stack chairs @ 114	2,280.00
2 file cabinet	500.00
bookshelves	400.00
Insurance on equipment	100.00
Mail @ 60/mo.	720.00
Maintenance on equipment	1,500.00
Office supplies	700.00
Expenses for visitors to campus	1,500.00
Publications and Copy Center	4,000.00
Software	1,000.00
Subscriptions and books	2,000.00

Telecommunications (3 phones @ 50/mo.)	1,800.00
installation charge	300.00
Voicenet @ 15/mo.	180.00
Travel/Staff Development	2,000.00
Miscellaneous	1,000.00
Total:	118,322.00

References

Berrill, K. (1990). Anti-gay violence, victimization, and defamation in 1989. Washington, D.C.: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

Shepard, C. (1990). Student services assessment: Report on the quality of campus life for lesbian, gay, and bisexual students. UCLA Student Affairs Information and Research Office.