

# UC San Diego Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Resource Center Qualitative Assessment 2015

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**Assessment Team**

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## **Executive Summary**

The UC San Diego Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT) Resource Center conducted a qualitative assessment of outcomes correlated with participation in the life of the Center. The findings included:

- Community members develop an understanding of multiple identities and how these identities intersect when they frequent the LGBT Resource Center
- Individuals feel supported by the LGBT Resource Center
- An inclusive and intergenerational community is created by those who frequent the LGBT Resource Center

Three learning outcomes were frequently achieved:

- Community members are able to receive the support that they need in order to prioritize and persist through their educational/career and personal life with staff and faculty that advocate on their behalf and truly care about their future
- Those that are part of the space have a stronger ability to define and describe their identities because of their connection to the LGBT Resource Center
- Community members show a desire to give back to their communities by participating in LGBT related or non-LGBT related student/employee organizations

Other significant findings were:

- Community members find empowerment in their identities by connecting with other members at the LGBT Resource Center
- Community members see the intersections between their own identities and academia

## Introduction

In the winter of 2015, the UC San Diego Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT) Resource Center conducted a qualitative assessment of the community which is connected to the Center. The assessment team was comprised of two undergraduate interns of the LGBT Resource Center and the Director of the LGBT Resource Center. The assessment answers one big question: what happens as a person interacts with the LGBT Resource Center? Prior to the assessment, a number of learning outcomes were developed which helped guide the assessment. These learning outcomes were advanced based on the experiences and expertise of the professional staff of the LGBT Resource Center. They are grounded in current theory and practice related to the role of campus-based LGBT Centers in the development of LGBT students in higher education environments.<sup>1,2</sup> The learning outcomes are included in Appendix A. A secondary question the assessment attempted to answer: Does the community connected to the LGBT Resource Center learn what the outcomes indicate they would?

## Methods

### *Participants*

The assessment team compiled a list of six participants that are involved, in one way or another, in the LGBT community at UC San Diego. They were selected based on their potential to reveal varied, differing and informed perspectives of the LGBT Resource Center. These participants were contacted and asked if they were interested in being a part of an assessment of the LGBT Resource Center. After agreeing to participate, the assessment team scheduled one-on-one interviews with the six participants. The participants included a mix of undergraduates, graduates and staff in relative proportion to the frequency that these members access the Center. For the purpose of this assessment, each interviewee was assigned a letter to easily identify them and maintain their anonymity.

### *Data collection*

While Appendix A details the learning outcomes staff articulated which were desired, Appendix B includes the questions that were asked of each participant. An interview protocol located in Appendix C was designed based on the proposed learning outcomes in Appendix A. An appreciative framework was also utilized to help understand experiences in the Center.<sup>3</sup> Each member of the undergraduate team was randomly assigned three participants to interview. Interviews lasted between 30 and 90 minutes, were recorded, transcribed and analyzed. Interviews were conducted in private spaces of the LGBT Resource Center.

### *Analysis*

Interviewees reviewed the transcription of their interviews to ensure the accuracy of the data. One member of the assessment team conducted three interviews (Interviewee A, B and C), a second member conducted three more interviews (Interviewee D, E and F). Then the member of the assessment team who conducted the interview coded that transcription for learning outcomes. These codes were initially analyzed across three

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<sup>1</sup> Patton, L. (Ed.). (2010). *Culture centers in higher education: Perspectives on identity, theory, and practice*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

<sup>2</sup> Stewart, D. L. (Ed.). (2011). *Multicultural students services on campus: Building bridges, re-visioning community*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

<sup>3</sup> Watkins, J. M., & Cooperrider, D. (2000). Appreciative inquiry: A transformative paradigm. *OD Practitioner: Journal of the Organizational Development Network*, 32(1) 6-12

interviews (Interviewee A, B and C' codes were analyzed for themes. Interviewee D, E and F's codes were analyzed for themes.) This coding analysis revealed initial across-interview themes. The two interviewers then came together to look for common themes across all the data, comparing the themes of A, B and C with the themes of D, E, and F. The full assessment team met weekly over the course of 10 weeks to discuss immediate reflections, experiences and analysis.

## **What happens as a person interacts with the LGBT Resource Center?**

There were three overall themes across the six interviews that allowed the assessment team to understand the daily interactions of community members at the LGBT Resource Center. These three overall themes include identities, community and support, and intergenerational interactions.

### ***Identities***

The data gathered during the 2015 qualitative research indicated those who frequent the LGBT Resource Center develop an understanding of multiple intersecting identities and how such identities are navigated by community members. Interviewees A, B, and C recognized a further understanding of their own identities through community, and support provided by community members, at the LGBT Resource Center. As a result those who utilize the space become more aware of their own identities. Interviewee B states that the 15 year anniversary symposium of the LGBT Resource Center was a very great experience. They said, "that really helped me with my identity. I was having difficulties identifying my own gender... after that, that was one of the big factors that helped me." The various experiences of our interviewees at the LGBT Resource Center indicate they have learned that identity is a "continuous process" and is rarely "stagnant."

### ***Community and Support***

The Resource Center has provided a sense of support for individuals as well as creating an inclusive community for everyone. The individuals that frequent the Resource Center create a supportive network through the Center's programs and groups. Interviewee A said, "something really beneficial has been [one of the groups], and I really like that space because I have made a lot of good friends and there has been a lot of dialogue and conversation." Interviewee C mentioned that it was because of the support and community from older community members that they were able to understand one of their identities. Interviewee B commented on the cross community support system. The interviewee mentioned that, although they are not an active member of the LGBT community, they recognize that the intersecting identities across communities promote solidarity. Not only does the LGBT Resource Center provide support for folks within the community, but also for folks that are in solidarity with the LGBT community.

### ***Intergenerational Interactions***

It is uncommon to be able to have an intergenerational conversation among LGBT-identified folks in the broader community, but at the LGBT Resource Center there are several opportunities for individuals to mentor each other in numerous ways across generations. One of these opportunities is through the Intergenerational Dialogues program, where individuals have a space where they can share and learn about other folks' diverse histories, stories, and experiences in the queer culture throughout the years. Interviewees commented on how important it is for undergraduates to have this intergenerational space where they can interact with staff and faculty at the UC San Diego campus in order for them to grow and develop as individuals. For example, Interviewee F had the chance to engage in one of these critical conversations at the LGBT Resource Center where it was clear that "having visible queer, or LGBT, staff and faculty members is

really important” for the community. Interviewee F explained how “[seeing] people being out and successful in the world is really impactful” and influential to undergraduates and therefore the LGBT Resource Center should continue to maintain and support these intergenerational interactions at the space.

## **What do people who frequent the Center learn?**

Though the assessment team found three meta-themes throughout the six interviews, there were two other prominent sub-themes that were significant for this assessment. These two sub-themes include power and comfort from navigating intersecting identities and higher education.

### ***Power and Comfort from Navigating Intersecting Identities***

The data indicated the LGBT Resource Center serves as a space where individuals can grow and develop by learning about their multiple identities in order to define themselves, by learning to apply the knowledge they gain concerning their identities to other aspects of their lives, and by learning to relate their own experiences with others. Further data showed that the LGBT Resource Center encourages the ability for community members to explain how the intersections of their multiple identities connect them with other individuals and social issues. For example, Interviewee D expressed how they utilize the LGBT Resource Center as a way to have power over their multifaceted identity and use their identities to make connections with other folks who “fall within the LGBTQ+ spectrum, but at the same time [are] all different.” This power that one has over their identities encourages the understanding of oneself, and the understanding of how they situate themselves in their environment. This provides community members with the comfort they need to be themselves and make connections with other individuals. Interviewee E mentions how the “networks of support” that the community at the LGBT Resource Center maintains allow for those critical connections to be made. By sharing an identity or sharing an experience, community members are able to connect with each other, “creating the mutual support and comfort that encourages learning” from one another at the LGBT Resource Center.

### ***Higher Education***

Interviewees A, B and C understood the intersections between their identities and academia. Additionally, they understood the ways in which being socially aware allows them to engage in critical conversation. For example, Interviewee C mentioned that the Resource Center helped them engage in critical conversations regarding queer issues in non-LGBT spaces. Interviewee B expressed that due to their social awareness, they find themselves analyzing power dynamics and systems into which they fall. Finally, when asked about social and political issues surrounding the LGBT community, interviewee C said, “one issue is the recognition about the treatment of queer bodies in education.” They then continued to address this by sharing that education is very heteronormative and gendered. Overall, the interviewees demonstrated that the intersections between their identities and academia allow them to be a resource to others.

## **Conclusion**

During this assessment, the assessment team learned that all interviewees recognize ways that the LGBT Resource Center helps community navigate their identities and continue to learn about them. Each interviewee also recognized that it is through community and support at the LGBT Resource Center that community members are able to understand more aspects of their identities. As mentioned by every

interviewee, intergenerational conversations that occur at the LGBT Resource Center are essential to helping community members grow and develop as individuals. This assessment shows that there are many resources provided by the LGBT Resource Center that advocate for the growth of individuals. Though there are some refinements to be made to the methodology of this assessment, the data gathered was useful to evaluating the success of the LGBT Resource Center's work.

### ***Next steps - Refining Learning Outcomes and Interview Questions***

Our assessment of the LGBT Resource Center has yielded many commonalities and many unique factors among the attitudes and ideas of those interviewed. Overall, many of the learning outcomes imagined closely resembled each other, and it would have been beneficial to refine the outcomes and make them more specific. Many of the outcomes and questions were structured in a vague manner that caused confusion amongst the interviewees. For example, one interview question was structured to gather data from folks who have been involved in the community for a longer period of time which resulted in very vague responses from interviewees who were in their first year at UC San Diego. The assessment team recommends reevaluating and refining these learning outcomes, as well as assessment questions, in order to address contemporary issues in the UC San Diego LGBT community.

### ***Overall Reflections of the Assessment Team***

After conducting, transcribing, and analyzing six interviews, the assessment team found that the involvement of community members at the LGBT Resource Center varies, but some level of involvement is essential to the growth of every individual that frequents the Center. Each interview represented a different facet of the LGBT community, demonstrating the diversity of those who frequent the space. In reviewing our methods of research and analysis, the assessment team was able to ascertain several relevant reflections about the LGBT Resource Center and the community that it creates.

Community members receive support at the LGBT Resource Center. They need this support in order to persist in their education, prioritize their personal life, and achieve their career goals. Staff advocate on their behalf, and truly care about their future. Because of their connection to the LGBT Resource Center individuals have a stronger sense of how to define and describe their identities. Community members want to give back to their communities.

While applying this qualitative methodology, the assessment team also found different areas that we felt could improve the experience of the LGBT Resource Center. This included a continued focus on those most marginalized and at the intersections of multiple marginalized identities – in particular queer and trans people of color, and especially trans women of color. Also of note was the ongoing need for intergenerational conversations, and support for those exploring their own identity especially in terms of academia.

### ***In Closing***

Through this process, the workings of the LGBT Resource Center have become more clearly understood. This document serves as a reference for this moment in time for the life of the Center and a guide for future directions of UC San Diego's LGBT Resource Center. It captures the lived experiences of those who frequent the Center, and the growth, development and learning the Center provides. The assessment process has certainly changed the direction of the individuals who served on the research team.

# Appendix A

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## ***LGBT Resource Center Learning Outcomes***

How do we define our effectiveness?

1. Community members are able to define and describe their own identities
2. Community members learn about their multiple identities in order to define themselves, learn to apply the knowledge they gain concerning their identities to other aspects of their lives, and learn to relate their own experiences with others
3. Community members expand their understanding of the LGBT community, connect these understandings to their own ethnic/racial identities and relate to all of these communities on different levels than they may have thought about before
4. Community members are able to explain how the intersections of their multiple identities connect them with other people and social issues
5. Community members will give back to their communitie(s) by participating in LGBT related or non-LGBT related organizations
6. LGBT leaders formulate an understanding of leadership and collaboration with other campus constituents by participating in their respective organizations
7. Community members blend their understanding of themselves with how they may fit within a society where they may be from social group(s) that are marginalized
8. Community members are able to explain and recognize important social and political issues regarding sexual orientation and gender identity in LGBT and/or non LGBT related communities
9. Community members support one another in the Center's open, diverse and public space and learn about themselves and others in this process
10. Community members understand that their personal lives and education/career intersect at the Center since there are always social and educational interactions occurring
11. Community members utilize the Center to navigate on and off campus resources
12. Community members are able to receive the support that they need in order to succeed in their educational/career and personal life

# Appendix B

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## Interview Questions

1. How do you define and describe your own identity?
2. How does your identity affect your education/work life?
3. How does your identity intersect with others in the LGBT Resource Center community? How does that impact you?
4. Think back to a peak experience that you have had with the LGBT Resource Center. Tell a story about that time. What happened? What were you doing? What were others doing? What contributed to the success of that experience? Tell the story giving some detail.
5. Without being modest, what did you value most about yourself in this experience?
6. If you had three wishes that would ensure more peak experiences like the ones you described, what would they be?
7. In what ways do you give back to our community?
8. Do you participate in any LGBT groups? In what capacity? Describe the participation.
9. What things do you do in the University community outside of the LGBT Resource Center? Does your identity impact that participation? If so, how?
10. What are the big social and political issues affecting the LGBT community today? What role does the LGBT Resource Center have in those issues?
11. In what ways, if any, has the Center and/or the community that frequents the Center supported you?
12. Imagine that you have been asleep for five years, and when you awake, you look around and see that the LGBT Resource Center has made incredible progress. In these five years the growth in community and program development has been tremendous. The Center is so successful that it has been announced that the Center will receive a national award for outstanding, phenomenal community and program development. As a result, you have been asked to be interviewed by The Advocate.

You agree to be interviewed. Imagine that I am the interviewer.

- What is UCSD LGBT community like?
  - How does the community sustain itself?
  - What programmatic elements are involved?
  - What do people do in community?
  - What does being in the UCSD LGBT communities feel like?
  - What is happening on a daily basis at the LGBT Resource Center?
13. Are there any questions that you thought I was going to ask you that I didn't?
  14. Is there anything else that you want to share with me regarding your experiences with the LGBT Resource Center?



# Appendix C

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## Interview with UC San Diego LGBT Resource Center Community Members Assessment 2015 Interview Protocols

### ***Introductions gratitude, and thanks for agreeing to do this***

*Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am working with Dr. Shaun Travers, Director of the LGBT Resource Center. Thank you so much for agreeing to meet with me today. We really appreciate your willingness to share your thoughts with the assessment team. First, let me review our agenda for today.*

### ***Agenda review***

This whole process will take about 60-90minutes today. It includes:

1. *Review of goal of the conversation*
2. *Introduction of the process*
3. *A confidentiality and consent form*
4. *Audiotape recording release consent form*
5. *Questions and answers regarding the process*
6. *The actual interview*
7. *Wrap up*
8. *Thank you*

### ***Goal of this Interview***

*The goal of this interview is to explore your experiences with the UC San Diego LGBT Resource Center in order to assess the Center's programs and practices.*

### ***Introduction***

- *This interview is part of the research involved in the assessment of the LGBT Resource Center.*
- *Notes will be written and an audio recording will be made.*
- *If you want to share written comments as well, that would be fine. I'd be happy to receive anything on paper or over e-mail to \_\_\_\_\_. I will provide you with the questions I asked at the end of today electronically to serve as a prompt.*
- *Do you have any questions before we begin?*

### ***Confidentiality and Consent Form (see hand out)***

*There are minimal risks attached to this assessment. However, because of the small number of people active in the LGBT community, complete anonymity and confidentiality cannot be assured. This inability to ensure anonymity and confidentiality may limit your ability to be as open as possible. However, the assessment methodology, which includes a process of reviewing the transcript, allows you to ensure that the information accurately describes your experiences. The recordings will be erased or destroyed once this study is completed.*

*<Have them review forms, answer any questions, and then sign the forms. Make a copy of the forms and return copies to them for their records.>*

### **Audio recording release consent form**

*As part of this project, an audio recording will be made of you during your participation in this assessment project. Please indicate below the uses of these audio recordings to which you are willing to consent. This is completely voluntary and up to you. In any use of the audiorecording, your name will not be identified and your identity will be kept anonymous. You may request to stop the recording at any time or to erase any portion of your recording.*

*<Have them review audio recording release consent forms, answer any questions, and then sign the forms. Make a copy of the forms and return copies to them for their records.>*

### **Introduction of the conversation questions**

*Over the course of the rest of our time together, I would like our conversation to travel over the terrain of your experiences with the LGBT Resource Center, your own growth and development, and the community that frequents the space. I have planned some questions, but the idea is for the stories to emerge as our interview evolves. If you need me to repeat a question, or clarify anything, I would be happy to do so.*

- *Do you have any questions before we begin?*

### **The interview questions**

- *See Interview Questions sheet, give the interview questions to the participants if they ask for it.*

### **Closing the interview**

*As I mentioned, once I finish the transcription, I will return it to you to review. You can redact anything at that time. All of the interviews I complete will be analyzed and the analysis will become part of a final report. Once the final assessment is complete, it will be available to the entire community on the LGBT Resource Center's website at <http://lgbt.ucsd.edu>.*

*You are awesome, thank you for doing this!*