



Research Brief

No. 1141 ♦ April 2017

Gender Resource Center Student Focus Groups

By Ashley L. Wright, Senior Research Analyst

Introduction

As a part of the planning process for a new gender resource center at Santa Monica College (SMC), the Gender Equity Committee (GEC) coordinated with the SMC Office of Institutional Research to conduct a focus group study with student participants. The purpose of the study is to inform the GEC of SMC students' experiences of any issues regarding gender and sexuality on the SMC campus. The focus groups will also inform the committee of participants' preferences in regards to the physical organization of the center, the name of the center, and the resources students would like available at such a center. The next section of the report details the focus group study procedures.

Data and Method

At the beginning of the spring 2017 semester, faculty and student organizations were provided an announcement script by researchers in the SMC Office of Institutional Research. The script detailed the overall purpose of the study and listed the student

incentives for participation which included light refreshments and a \$10 restaurant gift card. Student participants were recruited via snowball sampling through faculty classroom announcements, course email blasts, and student organization announcements.

To confirm their interest in participating in the study, students were instructed to complete a 2-minute interest form survey. The survey included 11 demographic questions, including age, race/ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, employment, military status, and disability status, affiliation with SMC clubs, affiliation with SMC sports, international student status, and contact information. The purpose of the survey was to inform the researchers of interested students' demographic characteristics in order to assign them to homogenous groups.

Following the completion of the survey, students were provided a confirmation with further details about the purpose of the study and the schedule of the focus groups.

Researchers followed up via email and by phone to confirm participation and provide students with assigned focus group date and time. Participants were oversampled to account for attrition. A total of 56 students were assigned to participate in a focus group. A summary of the demographic profile of students who signed up to participate in the study is described in the appendix.

Ten focus groups were conducted during the week of March 6, 2017 inside of a private office located in the SMC Counseling Services building. Of the 56 confirmed participants, 35 student participated in the focus groups. Each group included a moderator and an assistant moderator/note taker. The focus groups were de-identified; students were referred by an assigned number during the focus group. All focus groups were audio recorded for memory purposes. The 10 focus groups were made up of the following self-identified participant characteristics:

- LGBT, queer, or gender fluid
- Cisgender, heterosexual, White women
- Cisgender, heterosexual, women of color
- Cisgender, heterosexual, international women
- Cisgender, heterosexual, white men
- Cisgender, heterosexual, men of color

Four focus groups included 16 LGBTQ and gender fluid students. Three focus groups included 8 women of color and/or international women. One focus was composed of 4 white women. One group included 3 white men. Lastly, one group was composed of 4 men of color. The next sections will discuss issues of gender and sexuality indicated by student participants, followed by participants' suggested resources.

Issues on Campus

As an opening question, students were asked to describe the general SMC environment. Nearly all students stated that SMC was an open, welcoming, diverse, and relaxed campus. Many participants stated that heterogeneity of the student population allowed them the opportunity to interact with students from a variety of racial/ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Faculty were generally described as having progressive or "liberal" attitudes which students found conducive to an inclusive learning environment. Overall, students expressed that their experience at SMC was positive.

To capture the types of issues students felt existed on campus, the focus groups were asked a series of questions in relation to gender identity and sexual orientation, including:

- Whether SMC was a place they could freely express their gender identity and sexual identity
- If they had ever experienced or witnessed harassment or bias based on the expression of gender identity or sexual orientation
- If they had ever experienced or witnessed physical or sexual assault based on the expression of gender identity or sexual orientation
- If they had ever experienced or witnessed intimate partner violence

SMC Issues will be divided into the categories of LGBTQ, women, international students, and men, followed by a discussion on the resources each category of students expressed interest in

including in a campus gender resource center.

”

It's a sort of environment where you're not hurt, but you're not helped either.

LGBTQ Issues

LGBTQ students generally felt that SMC was a place where they could freely and openly express their gender identity and sexual orientation. For students who described coming from less open high school settings or conservative family backgrounds, they found SMC to be a place where they could finally be themselves. As one student stated: “I feel like I can breathe here.” All LGBTQ participants agreed that SMC was a place where anyone could express their personal identities without being “bothered” or experiencing hostility from faculty, staff, or peers.

Most LGBTQ students reported never or rarely having experienced or witnessed instances of harassment, discrimination, and physical or sexual assault on campus. A more commonly raised issue was that of intimate partner violence and dating violence. Several participants referenced the issue of intimate partner violence within the LGBTQ community. One student shared that they knew of transgender students experiencing physical violence in new relationships after revealing their gender identity to their partners. Another LGBTQ student described personal experiences of “unwanted kissing” on a date with a fellow

student. This student also stated that she dealt with instances of unwanted advances by male students. Though students believe that issues of intimate partner violence were most likely to occur outside of the SMC campus, all students reported that they either heard of or knew someone within the LGBTQ community who at one point experienced discrimination, harassment, and physical assault or sexual assault.

Several students within the focus groups brought up the issue of LGBTQ visibility on the SMC campus. Many stated that they struggled to find the presence of an LGBTQ community or claimed they did not know if one even existed. Furthermore, many expressed disappointment in SMC’s lack of a designated space for LGBTQ students to meet and interact on campus. Despite the lack of a visible community, students felt as if there was a sense of acceptance at SMC. However, they also felt as though LGBTQ issues were not openly talked about or addressed. In other words, the students did not feel threatened, but they also did not feel entirely supported.

Few participants knew of existing LGBTQ campus resources, such as SMC’s Gender Sexuality Alliance organization and “Town Hall” discussions. But, many participants did not know of LGBTQ resources at SMC or where to find information on them. Some went as far as to say that they rarely encountered other LGBTQ students to engage with outside of existing friend groups. Others reported only meeting LGBTQ students in courses that discussed topics of gender and sexuality (Women’s Studies, Political Science, Sociology, etc.). Overall, there was consensus among these students that the lack of a visible community made it difficult for them to

find fellow LGBTQ students and support on campus.

LGBTQ Resources

The LGBTQ students felt that it was most important for a gender resource center to be the designated space to bring together the LGBTQ community and provide them needed support and resources. They believed a center should act as a hub to connect students to existing resources and organizations on campus (SMC's GSA club) as well as LGBTQ organizations within the Los Angeles community (LA LGBT Center). Emphasis was also placed on the center acting as a "safe space" to discuss any issues they faced and to also educate cisgender/heterosexual persons about lives of LGBTQ students. Most importantly, students believed that if a center was created, that it needed to be properly advertised as an existing resource for LGBTQ students, so all students are aware that there is an existing space for them on campus.

Several of the students believed the center should offer emotional support to LGBTQ students in the form of one-on-one counseling and support groups. In their opinion, it was critical that the center be staffed by some LGBTQ persons so students feel comfortable entering the space and speaking to someone. Though they preferred the idea LGBTQ staff, they felt that cisgender, heterosexual allies or counselors specifically trained to assist LGBTQ students could also aid in creating safe space. If the center could not provide such support in-house, then students wanted the center to direct them to off-campus services. In the same way, LGBTQ students communicated the necessity of LGBTQ students staffing the center alongside professionals. Student staff

would allow them to make connections with other students "going through the same things" and establish the center as a safe space for LGBTQ students to congregate.

In addition to emotional support, students wanted the center to provide them with LGBTQ health services and resources, such as information on homosexual sex and alternative relationship types, resources for transitioning students (therapy, medical advice, and financial resources), reproductive health, and STD/STI testing. Other forms of support referenced were:

- Counseling for students who are coming out
- Support for survivors of assault and rape
- Education and support about preventing intimate partner violence
- Information and educational resources for non-acceptant families
- Legal services in response to discrimination or assault
- Child care/family support

”

I think that there isn't an LGBT presence on SMC, or at least not a visible one, and visibility is a really critical thing, I think, for our community.

Finally, students wanted the center to be a place to relax, study, and "just be". Many envisioned that the space provide

access to LGBTQ literature, media, and art. They hoped that a center would also coordinate campus events to educate the public and to celebrate the LGBTQ community. Moreover, student believed that the center should be used as a platform to discuss difficult issues and to “make a statement.” One participant suggested that the center partner with SMC departments to offer courses on LGBTQ history and issues to educate cisgender, heterosexual faculty, staff, and students.

Women’s Issues

”

As women, we try to be nice to everyone. And I feel like sometimes our niceness can be misinterpreted as a come on, so I feel like that's an issue.

Students who identified as cisgender, heterosexual women cited a variety of gender-based issues they faced at SMC. While all female participants cited similar experiences on the SMC campus, white women, women of color, and female international students differed slightly in the types of issues they felt were most pertinent to women. Below is a description of the types of gender-based issues discussed by the different categories of women, followed by the resources they would like a gender resource center to contain.

➤ *Women of Color*

Similar to the responses in the LGBTQ focus groups, the student participants who identified

as women of color believed that everyone at SMC was free to express their identity. Compared to their high schools, SMC was a very diverse campus where students respect each other. As women, they felt they were free to wear whatever they wanted as an expression of their gender identity and believed LGBTQ students appeared comfortable doing so as well. They saw LGBTQ students who were open about their sexual orientation - something they did not see often in high school - as a reflection of SMC’s accepting environment. To them, SMC was a “no judgement zone.”

Correspondingly, the women did not report witnessing any discrimination, harassment, or assault of LGBTQ students on campus. However, they shared numerous anecdotes of LGBTQ they knew outside of school who struggled with a lack of family acceptance.

As for themselves, the women reported that most incidents of discrimination, harassment, and assault were thought to occur off-campus or near campus. All of the women shared that they had experienced street harassment near campus bus stops or outside of campus. They communicated that they also knew of friends and acquaintances who had experienced severe forms of harassment and/or physical assault close to the SMC campus. One such example was an attempted kidnapping of a female student at a bus stop located in close proximity to the SMC campus. Additionally, the women of color knew of several people who experienced intimate partner violence and family violence. They reported seeing couples engaged in verbal disputes on campus as well as having friends who were survivors of physical abuse.

As a follow-up, the women of color were asked if they felt safe on campus. Most believed that they were socialized as women to be

constantly vigilant, but that their level of comfortability was dependent on the time of day and where they were. Generally, they did not feel safe walking around the SMC campus at night. Unique to this group was that despite their fear of walking alone on campus at night, they were uncomfortable approaching male authority figures or male police officers for assistance. The women of color explained that they were taught by their parents to be wary of police because of their status as racial/ethnic minorities from low-income neighborhoods. Instead of utilizing police escort services, they would talk on the phone while walking to their cars or rely on the “buddy system”. Although they lacked trust in law enforcement, the women of color still viewed SMC as a safe community overall, where bystanders would intervene in any instances of attempted assault or domestic disturbances to help one another.

➤ *International Women*

Women participants who were enrolled as international students communicated that also enjoyed SMC’s open atmosphere. A few of the participants reported that they attended high school in the US (as exchange students) and found the environment at SMC to be a vast improvement. They believed that college students were more mature and more accepting than those in high school. One student stated that she felt more respected at SMC and that she was no longer considered “the weird exchange student”. Many viewed the campus as progressive as exemplified by courses and campus “town halls” where gender and sexuality issues are being openly discussed.

The international women in the study stated that did not witness any overt incidents of discrimination or harassment based on gender or sexual identity. However, some alluded to seeing “bigoted” messages scrawled in SMC

bathroom stalls and knew of international male students to made jokingly homophobic comments. Some women attributed the lack of overt discrimination and harassment to the fact that it appeared to be more prevalent on online and on social media, as such platforms afforded anonymity. Like the women of color, the international women shared that they frequently experienced verbal and street harassment by males, usually off-campus, near bus stops, and around construction sites. While most “cat calls” were perceived as being based on physical appearance, they expressed that the verbal harassment committed by fellow students was frequently based upon stereotypes about their countries of origin. Two of the participants pointed out the example of the oversexualized image of Brazilian women in the media.

The women also reported experiences of physical and sexual assault such as unwanted touching at parties and in-crowds and coerced/non-consensual sexual activity under the influence of drugs or alcohol. One participant recounted an experience of a strange man who attempted to grope her near a bus stop, as well as incidents of unwanted advances by male peers. They also knew of many LGBTQ people whose families disowned them or who had been physically or sexually assaulted because of their LGBTQ identity.

”

Student leaders or faculty haven't really made a step to say outright that it is okay to have open conversations.

Unique to international women were issues that stemmed from their transition to the US after growing up in countries with strict patriarchal values and cultural norms. They believed that women and LGBTQ people faced more discrimination and violence in their home countries, but that there were still many issues international students faced. Students from West Asian countries described a conflict between the traditional gendered expectations within their families and the growing liberalization of gender roles in US society. A student used the example of her father's difficulty accepting her mother's newfound role as a working spouse. Along this line, two of the participants felt that arranged marriage was still a problem for women from certain cultural traditions, even after they immigrate to the US. Additionally, they believed that emotional abuse and physical abuse in the family to be all too common among international students. They felt that low-income, immigrant women were especially vulnerable because they lacked financial stability and education needed to leave their abusers.

➤ *White Women*

”

It just feels so bad that I can't walk around safely because I am a woman.

Like the women of color and international women, the White women viewed SMC as a diverse, open, and welcoming campus. All of the White cisgender, heterosexual participants reported that they felt safe on campus and believed that students were free to express their gender identities and sexual orientation. Like the women of color and international women, most

White women described experiences of cat calling or unwanted male advances. Although uncomfortable, those incidents were conveyed as being commonplace. One woman stated: "I mean, I've been cat-called a few times. But unfortunately, what girl hasn't?" Another participant chimed: "Yeah, that happens. But, oh, well."

The women felt that incidents of verbal harassment were more prevalent at night and that people on campus during the day were generally respectful. Matching the experiences of women of color and international women, the White women knew of many women outside of SMC who encountered forms of physical or sexual assault and intimate partner violence. Although, one participant believed that SMC's lack of dormitories helped to abate the issue: "we don't have sorority-fraternity/dorms influence, and this is usually where everything happens." Despite the perception that it did not occur often on the SMC campus, all the White women felt that sexual assault and rape were serious issues, especially for women in their age group. Many reported that they knew of friends, family, and peers who were survivors.

Women's Resources

Women suggested a variety of resources they would like to see at a gender resource center for themselves, LGBTQ students, and male students. All of the women agreed that a gender resource center should be a space where women feel comfortable speaking to someone about any issue they may have. They believed that it was important to include professional counseling staff who have experience in addressing:

- Physical abuse/intimate partner violence
- Harassment
- Sexual assault/rape
- Physical and psychological effects discrimination/oppression
- Emotional distress
- Struggles with school or in academics

Like the LGBTQ students, the women participants thought the center's staff should come from diverse backgrounds so that students feel as though they can relate to them. Women of color specifically believed that they would feel safer if there were more female authority figures available to assist them. They feared that a male officer may would dismiss their reports as something non-serious. But, if more female authority figures were made available, they believed they would be more comfortable reporting incidents.

In addition to professional staff, the women participants also wanted a gender resource center to include student staff members. Students who felt too intimidated by the prospect of opening up to a professional would have the option of speaking to their peers. Aside from individual professional and peer counseling, the women focus group participants indicated that they wanted the center to organize and host support groups for various issues related to gender and sexuality. The support groups would allow students to speak with others who have shared experiences and will provide opportunities to form friendships.

Beyond counseling, the women focus group participants wanted the center to direct students to health services and

legal services. Ideas for health services included:

- Psychological services available in the Wellness and Wellbeing Center
- STD/STI testing
- Women's reproductive health
- Resources for mothers
- Resources for safe sex

As for legal services, they felt that staff within the gender resource center should help students know the options they have if they experience assault, abuse, or discrimination. Specifically, they believed staff should be there to assist with filing police and/or Title IV reports and to help students navigate the legal system if they wished to press charges against perpetrators. In relation to this, women of color believed that the center should also offer legal resources to help support minorities and other groups targeted by the Trump administration, such as the undocumented students at SMC.

Lastly, it was important to international women that a gender resource center meet the needs of a constantly changing student population from diverse cultural backgrounds. Faculty involvement in the center was thought by all women to be a crucial aspect of both relating to and educating an increasingly heterogeneous student body. Additionally, the education of faculty and students was believed to be the most effective way to make SMC a safer environment for women and LGBTQ students. The women also wanted a gender center to include educational opportunities, such as town hall discussions of polemic issues, training for allies, and the organization of events that show support for LGBTQ students and women's empowerment.

Men's Issues

The cisgender, heterosexual men primarily focused on the categories of people they believed experienced the most issues based on gender identity and sexual orientation, such as women, LGBTQ students, and international women. In general, they did not see themselves as an at-risk population that needed a gender resource center. Even so, they shared similar ideas as women and LGBTQ students in terms of prevalent issues on the SMC campus and the resources they believed would best address them.

If anywhere, this is the perfect place to express yourself.

Their assessment of the general SMC environment was analogous to that of the women and LGBTQ participants – the campus is diverse, open, and everyone appears free to express themselves. In the words of the male students, "If you do it, people just mind their own business," and, "there's no rules against it, so I think it's pretty free in that sense." Like women, they shared that they primarily saw the harassment of LGBTQ students and women online in the form of cyberbullying and on their high school campuses. As racial/ethnic minorities, the men of color experienced racism outside of campus, but they believed that this kind of discrimination was not a problem on SMC's campus, where students were viewed as more mature and focused on school work. As for the issues of physical and sexual assault, all of the male participants knew of incidents of physical assault and rape happening in high school or to people they knew, but were not overtly aware of its

occurrence on the SMC campus. Like the White women, the White men questioned the prevalence the sexual assault on a community college campus and believed that it was a larger problem on universities and in dormitories.

...We might think that all men are strong, but there's many men that actually go through that [abuse].

Despite not witnessing or knowing of the prevalence of sexual assault on campus, both men of color and White males acknowledged the problem of intimate partner violence for female and LGBTQ students both on and off the SMC campus. One student shared an instance where he suspected a female friend had been physically abused the night before a course final. All male participants admitted to knowing of someone who had experienced domestic violence and some shared that they had personal experiences within their own families. One student commented, "Usually it happens in closed doors. You find out after it happens." Another stated that he believed that intimate partner violence was especially problematic for international women from non-Westernized countries, who are socialized to be demure and subservient to men. In all, their experiences in observing and personally experiencing issues led this group to consider in the necessity of a gender resource center.

Men's Resources

Although their reported personal experiences of gender- and sexuality-based issues differed

from those shared by women and LGBTQ participants, both men of color and White male participants offered several suggestions for women, LGBTQ persons, and cisgender, heterosexual men. Like all other participants, the men believed in the necessity of having counselors on staff with whom they could speak to about personal issues. Like the other participants, the men also felt that SMC students should work there, along with professional counselors as it is "more comforting to see students" when seeking services within a campus center.

”

I think it serves a greater purpose than just making this campus safer for LGBT folks.

Alongside counseling services was the suggestion that a gender resource center include a variety of educational resources for all students. Particularly, the men of color wanted a center to include classes and workshops on sexual orientation "so people can understand more about gender and sex and what makes them different." The students thought that question-and-answer platforms, courses, and opportunities to engage with LGBTQ students would improve interactions between cis-gender, heterosexual, and LGBTQ students. Such educational opportunities would allow LGBTQ students to directly teach fellow students about their experience and as opposed to students "just googling it."

Furthermore, the men suggested that there be education on the impact of patriarchy on both men and women, so that the center can also serve cis-gender, heterosexual male students. Finally, some male participants

communicated that they would like a space to find "practical" resources for gaining life skills. The students suggested that a campus gender center have legal services available for assisting students financing a house, buying a car, and paying for tickets to aid in the transition to adulthood.

Other resources male participants cited for all students were:

- Reproductive health services
- Information on sexual assault/rape prevention,
- Information on family services
- Information on SMC clubs and organizations
- Information on available mental health services

Counseling vs. Psychological Services

Counseling services were the most requested resource by all focus group participants. A common theme in all groups was the distinction made between the counseling they would like to seek at a gender resource center and the services they would seek at SMC's Wellness and Wellbeing Center (also referred to by students as Psychological Services). Students emphasized the need to have a space which specifically addressed issues of gender and sexuality faced by students at SMC. Several of them expressed that they were not comfortable going to the Wellness and Wellbeing center for gender- or sexuality based issues and some reported that they were generally uncomfortable with entering the center.

Many of their comments appeared to be related to the stigma associated with seeking out mental health services. Students expressed that entering a clinical setting made them feel “judged,” that others would think “something is wrong with them,” or worried that problems that were not thought to be severely pathological would be dismissed or invalidated. Furthermore, the participants believed that issues of gender and sexuality should be addressed separately by counselors with professional experience as well as students with shared identities or personal experiences. Solutions offered by students to alter the negative views of the Wellness and Wellbeing Center and “psychological services” were:

- Better advertise the types of services available to students at the Wellness and Wellbeing Center
- Clarify to students the difference between “confidential” and “non-confidential” counseling

The student commentary within the focus groups confirmed that they felt the need for a “separate” gender resource center. It also suggested the ways in which such a center could work in conjunction with existing student mental health services by disseminating information and referring students. The final sections of this report will discuss participants’ opinions on the physical space of a gender resource center, ideas for a center’s name, and a summary of the focus group findings.

Physical Space

Although the participants’ discussion focused primarily on campus issues and the staff and resources they would want in a gender resource center, they also provided their

general opinions about the physical space of a gender resource center. Students felt that it was critical for a gender resource to be open to all SMC students, staff, faculty, and people in the surrounding community. For participants, this also meant creating a center that was visually inviting. Students cited that the space be colorful, but gender neutral – that is, not “perpetuate gender norms” or stereotypes of masculinity and femininity. They suggested that the center display art or murals by LGBTQ artists and SMC students to create a “safe” and appealing atmosphere and to clearly signify the center’s purpose.

”

It should be a place where people feel safe and not have to worry about discrimination or other stuff that goes on campus.

In terms of physical layout, all participants requested that the space include both closed meeting rooms for individual/group counseling or meetings and a general “hang-out” area for students to relax and socialize. The students also added that it would be useful for the space to include an area with computers and desks for students to read, study, and complete homework. The participants emphasized that all spaces within the center should be comfortable and many desired a center that included a layout akin to a living room in terms of décor and furniture.

In addition to an inviting appearance and “homey” layout, it was suggested that the center house LGBTQ literature and movies for students to borrow and a dedicated area for pamphlets and information for related services, on campus resources, and club events. Finally,

all participant groups felt it was the most important to include a unisex bathroom. They firmly believed a unisex bathroom was necessary in order to make the space completely safe for LGBTQ students, gender non-conforming students, and students who are questioning their identity.

Naming the Center

A majority of the students believed that a gender resource center should include the words "gender" and "sexuality" so that the purpose of the center would be clearly communicated to students. Many students were satisfied with the names "Gender and Sexuality Resource Center" or "Gender Resource Center," or communicated that they thought these names were the most inclusive options. Many LGBTQ participants shared similar opinions about the title, "Gender and Sexuality Resource Center" as it included persons at different places on the gender and sexuality spectrum and many viewed the LGBTQ acronym as constantly "adding and changing." Some students also felt that the titles of the center should also include symbols (ex: pink triangle, rainbow flag) as a universal indicator of a LGBTQ safe space.

Although most students were comfortable with titles that included the words "gender," "sexuality," or LGBTQ symbolism, a smaller subset of students expressed preference for "less obvious" names. These participants felt that the word "gender" would have "too serious" of a connotation and deter cisgender and heterosexual students from entering. Their suggestions were to name the center after an influential activist or scholar or to instead use variations of the word "equality" in order to reflect the center's variety of student services.

Additional name suggestions were:

- "Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity"
- "Social Justice and Equity Center"
- "Inclusion Center"
- "Queer and Women's Center"
- "Equality Center"
- "The Stonewall Center"

Suggestions & Summary

All cisgender, heterosexual focus group participants emphasized resources geared toward supporting LGBTQ students. It was made clear by both LGBTQ and cisgender, heterosexual men and women in the study that the SMC campus lacks a space for LGBTQ students to form and find a sense of community. To make LGBTQ students supported, a major component of the gender resource center should be dedicated to addressing their unique sets of issues. Frequently mentioned resources included LGBTQ health services and counseling for emotional support, coming out or transitioning, discrimination, and physical and sexual assault. Based on participant responses, the center should also work with existing student organizations (GSA), faculty, and the administration to ensure that LGBTQ students not only feel free to express themselves, but also feel supported and encouraged by SMC to do so.

As evidenced by the study findings, SMC's cisgender, heterosexual female population are also in need of a space where they can seek support for issues of harassment, gender-based violence, including sexual assault and rape, and intimate partner violence. Such support should include counseling as well legal services to educate women on their

options for reporting incidents to SMC and to police. Women of color want to have female figures available to make them more comfortable with reporting incidents. International women expressed the need for a center and its staff to be cultural sensitive to the challenges international students face when assimilating to the U.S. after emigrating from what may be highly traditional or patriarchal countries of origin.

Male participants generally viewed the center as a space to be utilized by women and LGBTQ students. However, educational resources directed towards educating cis-gender, heterosexual men on LGBTQ and women's issues, as well as resources for men who experience harassment, physical/sexual assault, and domestic violence were viewed by participants as important components to a center. Additionally, the center can house information on health and educational resources, such as information on practical life skills cited by male participants.

All students want the option to speak to counselors or professionals that work specifically with issues of gender and sexuality. However, most of the participants emphasized the need of non-threatening space to talk about serious incidents and issues that is distinctive from the negative stigma associated with seeking psychological services. To address this need, counseling available in the center may include confidential counseling in-house, but maintain close ties with Center for Wellness and Wellbeing to refer students to non-confidential counseling for assistance with severe psychological distress or disorders. According to the focus group responses, an additional

solution to this issue would be the inclusion of trained student staff with whom students feel they can easily relate to.

The following bullet points summarize additional resources for which participants shared general agreement:

- A diverse staff that reflects the diversity of the SMC campus (LGBTQ, people of color, women)
- Student staff from similar backgrounds
- Coordinate support groups/discussions for students facing similar issues
- Educate the campus at large about issues of gender and sexuality faced by LGBTQ, gender non-conforming persons, and women
- Integrate and provide information on existing organizations and services on campus
- Include a unisex restroom, private meeting rooms, and open space for "hanging out"
- Connect with and provide information on health services and (LGBTQ) organizations outside of campus
- Host educational events such as movie screenings, speaking engagements, and town halls

Appendix: Demographic Profile of the Confirmed Focus Group Participants

*Note that charts reflect total confirmed participants, discluding those that notified researchers of their cancellation.





