

The University of Chicago

**Evaluation of Services and Program Development at the
LGBTQ+ Student Life Office at an Elite Private University
in the Midwest of the United States**

By

Gary Liu

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Faculty Advisor: Amanda Ceniti, Ph.D.

Preceptor: Amanda Ceniti, Ph.D.

Abstract

This study evaluates the services and programming of the LGBTQ+ Student Life Office at a prestigious private university in the Midwest United States. Employing two established evaluation frameworks—the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) and the Campus Pride Index (CPI)—the research provides a comprehensive assessment of the center’s operational effectiveness, with a focus on ally training, Safe Space and Safe Zone initiatives, counseling and health services, event frequency and quality, and user experience. Comparative analysis with five peer institutions further contextualized the center’s strengths and highlighted opportunities for growth. Findings indicate that the center performs strongly in most categories, particularly in delivering inclusive programming and fostering a supportive environment. However, limitations such as insufficient online event visibility and the disconnection from the formal LGBTQ+ alumni network were identified. To address these gaps, we proposed a future event idea—a career fair in partnership with the business school—and a structured student feedback survey for long-term service evaluation. This project not only contributes to institutional improvement but also offers a replicable model for evaluating and enhancing LGBTQ+ services across higher education settings.

Introduction

For many individuals, transitioning to college represents a significant milestone. However, they may encounter some mental health challenges in this new social environment. According to the Healthy Minds Study (2021-2022), more than 60% of college students met criteria for at least one mental health problem (Lipson et al., 2022). In another study conducted within the United States, almost three-quarters of students reported moderate or severe psychological distress (Abrams, 2022). Unfortunately, a substantial proportion of these students belong to the LGBTQ+ community. Research indicates that LGBTQ+ college students experience higher rates of depression and suicidal behavior than non-LGBTQ college students (Moran et al., 2018). It is also discovered that LGBTQ+ youth are twice more likely to experience mental health issues than their heterosexual peers (Platt et al., 2018).

A key factor influencing this significant disparity in the rates of depression and suicidal behavior is the level of social support received by LGBTQ+ college students, as social support could serve as a buffer against depression for LGBTQ+ college students (Moran et al., 2018). Fortunately, a university's LGBTQ+ center serves as a dedicated space to offer essential social support to LGBTQ+ students. The responsibilities and missions of an LGBTQ+ center may include but are not limited to creating a supportive social environment and safe spaces, faculty and student support, student advocacy, counseling, and hosting cultural events to give LGBTQ+ students a secure and encouraging environment (Sokolowski, 2017). To ensure that LGBTQ+ students receive sufficient support, it is crucial to assess the effectiveness of LGBTQ+ centers and identify areas of improvements.

The history of LGBTQ+ centers is relatively recent, and as a result, continuous improvement is a fundamental aspect of their development and operation (Phillips et al., 2022). Starting from the late 1960s, the LGBTQ+ community started to gain increasing acceptance. Systematic support and institutional resources for the community, such as dedicated service centers, were established in the beginning of 1971, and the first on-campus LGBTQ+ center for college students opened its door in the same year at the University of Michigan – Ann Arbor (Fine, 2012). Although the social environment is changing, there remains a strong need to provide structural supports for the LGBTQ+ community and enhance the services schools provide to LGBTQ+ students. Currently, many on-campus LGBTQ+ centers face challenges such as understaffing (Catalano & Tillapaugh, 2020) and insufficient funding and institutional support (Catalano & Tillapaugh, 2019). Consequently, students may have limited access to LGBTQ+ resources, especially mental health services. This issue is further supported by findings from the Trevor Project Report, which indicates that many LGBTQ+ youth continue to face barriers in accessing proper mental health care. In the 2022 report, the percentage of LGBTQ+ youth who were not able to access mental health care in each state of the United States ranged from 45 to 72 percent, showing that there is a clear opportunity for schools and communities to improve their support systems and reduce the percentages of youth lacking proper care.

This thesis focuses on a single LGBTQ+ center at an elite private institution in the Midwest, which is experiencing similar challenges, including funding, staffing, and recognition. This LGBTQ+ center was established in 2008 and was recognized as the best in its city in 2012. Initially launched as a mentorship program, the center hosted events such as “Gay Coffee Hour” and counseling activities. For several years, it ranked among the top institutions on the Campus Pride Index (CPI), the leading national benchmarking tool for assessing campus inclusivity and

safety for LGBTQ+ communities. This ranking reflects the institution and this center's strong commitment to fostering an inclusive environment, as the CPI evaluates various factors, including housing, education, and the performance of its LGBTQ+ center. However, from 2019 to 2023, the center faced significant challenges due to the influence of COVID-19 and other reasons, leading a prolonged period of leadership absence that lasted almost four years. The center has now welcomed a new director, who has been in the position for approximately one and a half years. The director is focusing on revitalizing the center and restoring its previous prominence and functionality. One key challenge identified by the director is the center's decrease in popularity and recognition on campus. This decline in awareness can be attributed to both the disruptions caused by the pandemic and the leadership's absence. The director is committed to addressing this issue and reestablishing the center's position. As the center enters this period of regrowth, it would be advantageous to have a better understanding of the center's current performance and implementing a set of concrete, evidence-based recommendations for how to improve its popularity and recognition.

This project aims to evaluate the current performance of this LGBTQ+ center and provide recommendations for its improvement. More broadly, it aims to raise awareness about the importance of supporting the LGBTQ+ community. The goal is also to encourage more schools to prioritize the well-being of their LGBTQ+ students and to motivate the LGBTQ+ centers to make meaningful investments in their services. Additionally, this project could serve as a foundation for future studies, inspiring other researchers to refine the methodology and develop more effective evaluation approaches.

Project Overview

The project is designed to evaluate the performance of the LGBTQ+ center at an elite private institution in the Midwest. The study also compares the services provided by this center with those at peer institutions across the United States. Additionally, this project aims to identify potential improvements to enhance the effectiveness and accessibility of these services provided by the LGBTQ+ center at this University. Finally, the project submitted a series of proposals to the center, aimed at organizing targeted events designed to enhance service delivery and address the specific needs of the LGBTQ+ community within the campus environment.

This institution, located in an inclusive social environment, received prestigious five-star rating from the CPI in 2012 according to its official website. However, aside from the information presented on the center's official website, there is limited publicly accessible data concerning its current operations. According to the center's director, the Campus Pride Index has not been utilized as a tool for assessment in recent years. Initially, the assessment of the center's performance was intended to be conducted using the Campus Pride Index (CPI) in collaboration with the center's staff. However, due to the sensitivity of the population served by the center, certain data remains confidential and could not be disclosed. Consequently, this project will rely solely on publicly available data for its evaluation. Fortunately, CPI evaluation questions are publicly accessible, and obtaining a center's CPI data is generally feasible without requiring direct assistance from the center.

The project begins with a comprehensive evaluation of the center's services, including its ally training program, Safe Space and Safe Zone initiatives, physical health support, mental health counseling services, website user experience, and the frequency and quality of center-sponsored events. The CPI served as the primary evaluation tool for assessing the ally training

program, Safe Space and Safe Zone initiatives, physical and mental health services, and event frequency. The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) framework was used to assess event quality, while a custom-designed survey evaluated user experience on the center's website.

To provide a comparative analysis, CPI data from this LGBTQ+ center was collected and compared with peer institutions, as industry-wide comparisons are an effective approach for gaining insights into best practices (Tomlinson-Short, 2023). A key strength of this methodology is its reliance on up-to-date data, as the CPI evaluates institutions annually. Additionally, user experience ratings for this center and its peer institutions were gathered and analyzed. However, while the CAS evaluation provides insights into event quality, its findings are limited to internal analysis, as CAS data is private and not publicly available.

The event design component of this project was informed by the evaluation's findings. Based on the analysis of the center's programming, a tailored event was developed to address identified needs and areas for improvement, ensuring that it enhances the center's visibility and impact within the university community. A customized student feedback survey was also developed for future use by the center. Currently, implementing the survey was beyond the scope of the project due to institutional policy constraints.

Methodology

This project aims to evaluate the services and program development at the LGBTQ+ center of a prestigious private institution in the Midwest of the United States. The project was conducted in two main phases. The first phase focused on assessing the quality of services provided by the center, identifying strengths, and pinpointing areas for improvement. In the

second phase, a series of proposed events, along with a customized student feedback survey, were developed to address identified service deficiencies, with the objective of strengthening the center's long-term operational effectiveness and enhancing its overall institutional impact.

Overall Evaluation

The assessment evaluated several key areas, including ally training, Safe Space and Safe Zone initiatives, counseling and health services, event frequency and quality, and overall user experience. These evaluation criteria all align with established metrics from CPI. According to Copeland et al. (2024), the CPI is a widely recognized framework for evaluating the LGBTQ+ environment of higher education institutions. Specifically, CPI incorporates ally training programs, Safe Space and Safe Zone initiatives, and physical health services as key assessment criteria. Additionally, mental health counseling services are considered an essential component of a supportive campus environment by CPI.

As for the quality of the events at the center and the user experience, we used other methods as described below.

This study evaluated user experiences with the LGBTQ center's website and social media to assess the accessibility of information related to representation and organizational visibility. A customized survey was used to assess whether a center performs well in the user's experience. Also, Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) was used to assess the quality of the events at the LGBTQ+ center, as CAS includes more detailed questions and is better suited for evaluating aspects such as quality.

These factors mentioned above are crucial indicators of the center's organizational impact and its effectiveness in fostering community engagement. The findings from all assessments were analyzed and synthesized into a comprehensive final report. Given that the

center has previously been evaluated using CPI, the assessment began with CPI before incorporating CAS standards and then the customized survey for a more comprehensive evaluation.

Comparative Analysis

Following the comprehensive CPI standard evaluation, a comparative analysis was conducted with LGBTQ+ centers at peer institutions. A sample of five peer institutions was selected, and their current CPI ratings—ranging from 0 to 5—were collected. The comparison focused on the first four service components as documented in the CPI database, providing valuable benchmarking insights. Information on user experience with the website at these institutions was collected through analysis of their official websites. The five sampled institutions included Tufts University, the University of Michigan – Ann Arbor, Northern Illinois University, Emerson College, and North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University. These five institutions were selected for various reasons. Tufts University, the University of Michigan – Ann Arbor, and Northern Illinois University were selected because they were among the top-five LGBTQ+ friendly institutions on CPI in 2023. These institutions were chosen within this framework to facilitate a comparative analysis with this medium Midwestern private research institution, focusing on prestige (Tufts University), publicity and the history of LGBTQ+ support (the University of Michigan – Ann Arbor, and the first university to build their LGBTQ+ center at the same time), and location (Northern Illinois University, also in the Midwest). Emerson College was chosen to see the difference between two different types of institutions (the difference between private school and liberal & arts college). North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University was one of the lowest-ranking universities. It was

chosen due to its ranking and similar population. It could be valuable to compare and analyze potential areas for enhancements.

The primary reason for selecting the CPI scores to compare was that they were the only publicly accessible data available for comparison, and as mentioned earlier, this project only used publicly-available data. This comparative analysis helped identify areas where other institutions excel, provide insights into best practices, and highlight potential challenges to avoid. However, it is important to recognize that these comparisons serve only as a reference point, as institutional differences—such as budget, the size of the LGBTQ+ center, and institutional priorities—can significantly impact operations. For instance, larger state universities may have more staff and resources compared to smaller private institutions, and the emphasis on LGBTQ+ issues may vary across campuses. Therefore, while the findings could offer valuable insights and inspiration, they are not intended to be directly replicated due to these contextual differences.

Event Quality

Following CPI, CAS was utilized to measure the quality of the events held by the center. In contrast to the CPI, which employs a standardized rating system, the CAS framework was used exclusively to assess the quality of events at the LGBTQ+ center at this institution. Rather than assigning numerical ratings, CAS utilizes a descriptive evaluation format, categorizing conditions as 'Compliant,' 'Non-Compliant,' 'Insufficient,' or 'Not Applicable,' supplemented by open-ended qualitative assessments. Additionally, unlike CPI, CAS data is not publicly accessible. Therefore, only specific components of the CAS framework were selected and analyzed using publicly available information, such as the LGBTQ+ center's official website and archived records. Consequently, a direct comparison of event quality between peer institutions was not conducted.

User Experience

Finally, a customized user experience evaluation survey was administered and the results were compared with those from five peer institutions. As there is currently no universally established standard for assessing user experience within either the CPI or CAS frameworks, this project evaluated user experience through the lens of each LGBTQ+ center's official website, which often serves as the primary source of information for users. The evaluation followed the core aspects of user experience as defined by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO, 2010): effectiveness, efficiency, satisfaction, accessibility, and context of use.

Based on these criteria, five components of each website were assessed to evaluate their overall user experience: the center's history, event listings (past, current, and upcoming), staff or affiliate information, contact details, and integration with social media platforms. These elements are considered key indicators of a high-quality user experience. Additionally, the same evaluation was conducted in each center across the selected institutions for comparative purposes.

Strategic Student Programming

As previously noted, the center needs to increase its visibility, particularly in terms of student interaction. The center previously hosted an alumni dinner event to foster connections with alumni, a strategy that proved effective in increasing its visibility. Based off this success, in the second phase, the project designed a more tailored event, with the data collected, to further reinforce the center's popularity and effectiveness in fostering connections with current students and broader university community.

Also, a holistic student feedback survey was designed for future implementation. Currently, the survey cannot be implemented due to center policies, but the center's director has expressed interest in conducting a student feedback survey in the future, and we designed this survey to ensure it could effectively capture relevant insights. The survey was designed to capture both general and targeted feedback. The survey was informed by established LGBTQ+ student feedback instruments, including those used by the LGBTQ+ Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, while also incorporating relevant questions from previous event-specific surveys conducted by this center. This mixed-method approach would facilitate the collection of both broad and detailed responses, providing a more nuanced and comprehensive assessment of the center's performance and impact.

LGBTQ+ Center Performance Assessment Tool

To assess the performance of this medium-sized Midwestern private research institution and compare it with five peer institutions, selected evaluations from the CPI were utilized. The detailed CPI evaluation form is in appendix 3.

There are eight assessment sections in CPI; however, only specific questions from select sections were utilized to evaluate the overall performance of the LGBTQ+ center. This selection is necessary as the remaining questions are not relevant to assessing the center's performance. The specific questions chosen for this purpose will be included in the appendices. The selected questions were drawn from the following sections: *LGBTQ+ Support & Institutional Commitment* (Section Two), *LGBTQ+ Student Life* (Section Four), and *LGBTQ+ Counseling & Health* (Section Seven). In Section Two, the selected questions include Question 1, Question 2,

Question 3, Question 4, and Question 10. These questions correspond to the following categories within CPI: *Resource Center/Office with Responsibilities for LGBTQ+ Students* (Question 1), *Paid Staff with Responsibilities for LGBTQ+ Support Services* (Question 2), *Ally Program or Safe Space/Safe Zone* (Questions 3 and 4), and *LGBTQ+ Alumni Group* (Question 10). These measurements align with the project's assessment of ally training programs and safe zone initiatives. For Section Four, Questions 1 and 2 have been selected. These questions pertain to *LGBTQ+ & Ally Student Organization* (Question 1) and *LGBTQ+ & Ally Graduate Student Organization* (Question 2). The selected questions partially correspond to the project's evaluation of event planning efforts. In Section Seven, Questions 1, 2, 4, and 5 were utilized. These questions are categorized under *LGBTQ+ Counseling/Support Groups* (Questions 1 and 2) and *Free, Anonymous, and Accessible HIV/STI Testing* (Questions 4 and 5). The measurements derived from these questions contributed to the assessment of physical and mental health support within the project's framework.

Question Overview

LGBTQ+ Support & Institutional Commitment (Section Two)

Question	Resource
1:	Center/Office with Responsibilities for LGBTQ+ Students

Question Paid Staff with
2: Responsibilities
for LGBTQ+
Support
Services

Question Ally Program
3:

Question Safe Zone
4:

Question LGBTQ+
10: Alumni Group

LGBTQ+ Student Life (Section Four)

Question LGBTQ+ &
1: Ally Student
Organization

Question LGBTQ+ &
2: Ally
Graduate
Student
Organization

LGBTQ+ Counseling & Health (Section Seven)

Question	LGBTQ+
1:	Counseling
Question	LGBTQ+
2:	Support Group
Question	Information
4:	and Preventing HIV/STI
Question	Free,
5:	Anonymous, and Accessible HIV/STI Testing

Results

CPI Ratings for the Institution

Since information on this private research institution is not available within CPI, this study relied on publicly accessible data and document analysis to determine the CPI rating of the LGBTQ+ center at this institution. The selected questions were analyzed in conjunction with the available data to determine the final CPI rating of this center. A key principle of the CPI rating system is that when a particular service is offered and fully accessible through an LGBTQ+ center, the center receives the maximum score of 5 out of 5 for that category.

In Section Two, the center earns 5 out of 5 for Question 1, 2, 3 and 4 by the rating rule of CPI. The existence of the LGBTQ+ center, along with the full-time employment of its director, confirms the information required for Questions 1 and 2. As for Questions 3 and 4, based on publicly available information from the center's official website, both programs are offered, thereby providing affirmative responses to these questions. Regarding Question 10, which investigates the presence of an active LGBTQ+ alumni group, the center has been working toward expanding its network and hosted an alumni dinner in the previous year. Although a formal LGBTQ+ alumni group exists on campus, it operates independently of the center, and there is no explicit reference to this group in the center's physical materials or on its official website. However, given these ongoing efforts, the institution can receive partial credit for this criterion. Overall, this institution achieves a rating of 4.6 out of 5 in Section Two. Furthermore, for the specific evaluation of LGBTQ+ & Ally Student Organization within this project, the institution attains a full rating of 5 out of 5.

Q1	Does your campus have a full-time professional staff member who is employed to support LGBTQ students and increase campus awareness of LGBTQ concerns/issues as 50% or more of the individual's job description?
Q2	Does your campus have an LGBTQ concerns office or an LGBTQ student resource center (i.e., an institutionally funded space specifically for LGBTQ, gender and sexuality education and/or support services)?
Q3	Does your campus have an ongoing Safe Zone, Safe Space and/or ally training program that are offered at a minimum annually to educate students, faculty and/or staff on LGBTQ issues and concerns?
Q4	Does your campus have an ongoing, visible network of people on campus who identify openly as allies/advocates for LGBTQ people and concerns?
Q10	Does your campus have an active, visible LGBTQ alumni group that is supported by the institution's alumni office?

Table 1. Selected CPI Questions in Section Two

In Section Four, the center gets 5 out of 5 in this section. Based on past and upcoming events listed on the official Instagram page of the LGBTQ+ center at this institution, it is evident that the center regularly hosts events aimed at increasing awareness of the LGBTQ+ community and supporting LGBTQ+ students. Consequently, the center receives a rating of 5 out of 5 in these two categories, resulting in an overall rating of 5 out of 5 for event planning. However, while this assessment accounts for event frequency, it does not measure the quality of the events. Further evaluation of event quality was conducted through the CAS framework.

Q1	Does your campus regularly offer activities and events to increase awareness of the experiences and concerns of: Lesbians, women loving women, and women who are same-gender loving, Gay men, men loving men, and men who are same-gender loving, Bisexual, pansexual and sexually fluid people, Transgender people, Genderqueer people and people with non-binary gender identities, Asexual people.
Q2	Does your campus regularly hold social events specifically for LGBTQ students? (e.g., queer prom, movie nights, open mic nights, etc.)

Table 2. Selected CPI Questions in Section Four

In Section Seven, this center again has a 5 out of 5 rating. The center performs well in supporting student's health. Although the LGBTQ+ center at this institution does not directly offer counseling services, it refers students experiencing identity-related concerns or other mental health challenges to the campus's Student Well-Being Center, where they can access specialized and professional support. Additionally, the LGBTQ+ center provides condoms, while the Student Well-Being Center offers HIV/STI testing and distributes informational brochures on safe sex practices. As a result, the LGBTQ+ center receives a rating of 5 out of 5 for all

questions in Section Seven according to the CPI framework. Furthermore, in this project's evaluation, the institution also attains a rating of 5 out of 5 for both physical and mental health services.

Q1	<p>Does your campus offer a support group(s) that assists individuals in the process of acknowledging and disclosing the following identities and their related concerns?</p> <p>Lesbians, women loving women, and women who are same-gender loving, Gay men, men loving men, and men who are same-gender loving, Bisexual, pansexual and sexually fluid people, Transgender people, Genderqueer people and people with non-binary gender identities, Asexual people.</p>
Q2	<p>Does your campus offer LGBTQ-supportive counseling services, with a staff that is knowledgeable of the needs and experiences of the following identities and their related concerns?</p> <p>Lesbians, women loving women, and women who are same-gender loving, Gay men, men loving men, and men who are same-gender loving, Bisexual, pansexual and sexually fluid people, Transgender people, Genderqueer people and people with non-binary gender identities, Asexual people.</p>
Q4	<p>Does your campus actively distribute condoms, dental dams, and LGBTQ-inclusive information on HIV/STI services and resources?</p>
Q5	<p>Does your campus offer free, anonymous, and easily accessible HIV/STI testing on a regular basis?</p>

Table 3. Selected CPI Questions in Section Seven

The quality of events and user experience could not be directly measured using the CPI framework; however, fundamental information could be examined and analyzed by using CPI. The LGBTQ+ center at this institution demonstrates a high level of preparedness. Based on CPI assessments, the center has achieved a rating of 5 out of 5 across nearly all measurement

categories, with the exception of the LGBTQ+ alumni group, which remains in development. Additionally, a comparative analysis between the LGBTQ+ center at this institution and those at peer institutions can provide further insight into its relative performance and areas for growth.

CPI Rating Comparison with Peer Institutions

In order to assess the performance of this LGBTQ+ center in comparison to its peer institutions, the ratings outlined above were utilized alongside the ratings of comparable institutions, which were obtained from the official CPI website. The comparative analysis is presented through two charts: the first chart illustrates the ratings for the four key measurement categories in Section Two, while the second chart provides a comparative evaluation of the two measurement categories in Section Four and the two measurement categories in Section Seven.

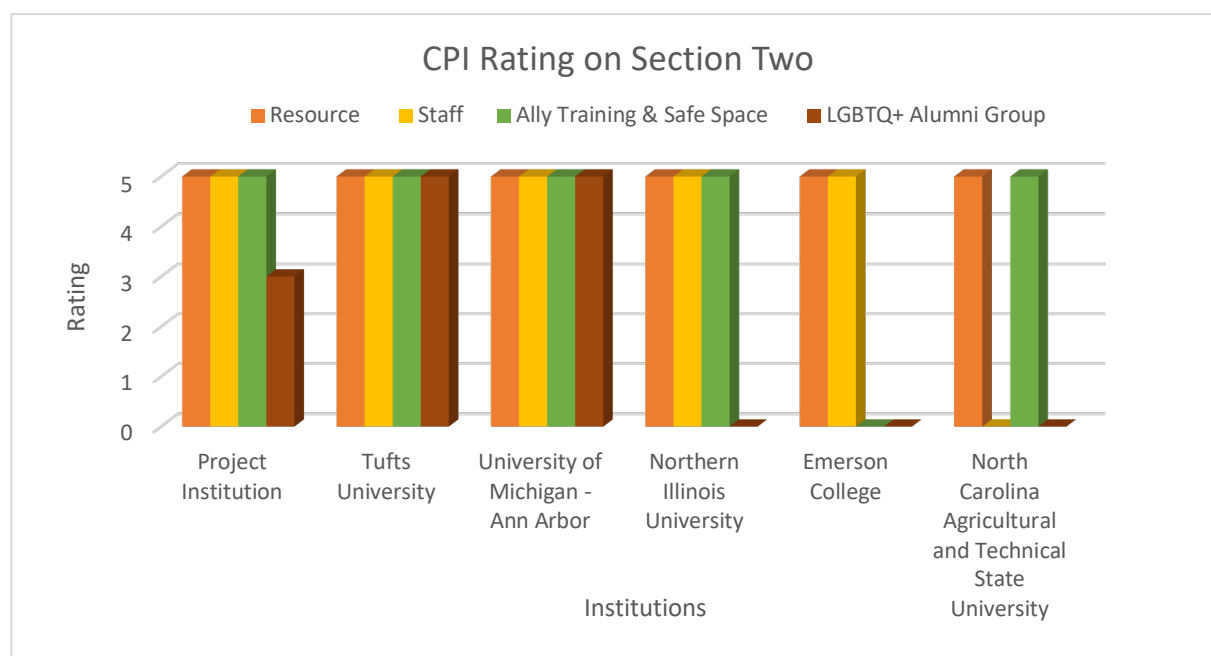


Figure 1. CPI Ratings on Section Two

When compared to top-ranked institutions on CPI, such as Tufts University, the University of Michigan – Ann Arbor, and Northern Illinois University, this LGBTQ+ center demonstrates comparable performance across the categories measured in this study. Its ratings in Resource, Staff, and Ally Training & Safe Space align closely with those of elite private institutions, historically renowned public universities with well-established LGBTQ+ centers, and peer institution within the Midwest region. The primary area for improvement remains the development of an LGBTQ+ alumni group, although this center already surpasses Northern Illinois University in this regard. When evaluated against a liberal arts college, this center outperforms in Ally Training and Safe Space initiatives, as well as in LGBTQ+ alumni engagement. Additionally, in comparison to an institution with a lower CPI ranking, this center demonstrates notable strength in staffing and alumni group formation. However, further efforts are still needed to formally establish and expand its LGBTQ+ alumni network.

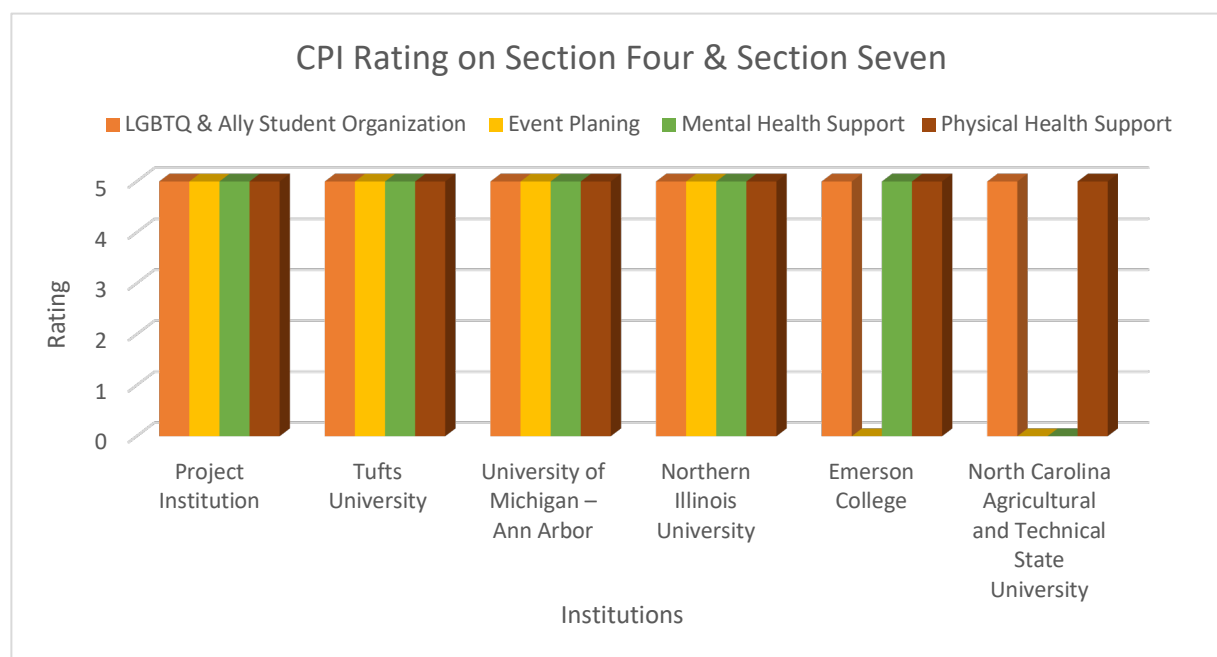


Figure 2. CPI Ratings on Section Four & Section Seven

In Section Four and Section Seven, this center once again gets the same rating as the other three top institutions. It gets 5 out of 5 rating in LGBTQ & Ally student organization, Event Planning, Mental Health Support, and Physical Health Support. It excels Emerson College in Event Planning and excels North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University in both Event Planning and Mental Health Support.

In Sections Four and Seven, this LGBTQ+ center once again achieves parity with the top-ranked institutions, receiving a 5 out of 5 rating in key categories, including LGBTQ+ & Ally Student Organization, Event Planning, Mental Health Support, and Physical Health Support. Furthermore, this center surpasses Emerson College in the domain of Event Planning and outperforms North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University in both Event Planning and Mental Health Support, further demonstrating its strong institutional support for LGBTQ+ initiatives and student well-being.

Overall, as a center that previously ranked among the top institutions in CPI, this LGBTQ+ center continues to demonstrate significant strengths and remains well-equipped to support its community. While certain areas require further development, this center performs exceptionally well across most evaluated categories, maintaining a strong foundation in institutional support, student engagement, and health services.

LGBTQ+ Center Event Quality Analysis

In the analysis of event quality, the CAS framework was applied, specifically focusing on *Part 2: Programs and Services*. A detailed CAS evaluation form is in appendix 4. As previously noted, due to the confidentiality of CAS data, no comparative analysis was conducted in this

section. The evaluation assessed two key subsections within Part 2: *Section 2.2: Value of Events* and *Section 2.3: Overall Program Structure*. To evaluate event quality, six primary criteria from Section 2.2 were utilized: the extent to which the events address student needs, provide health services, offer career support, establish a network of role models and mentors, enhance campus awareness, and promote access, diversity, equity, justice, and inclusion. In the past quarter, the LGBTQ+ center has organized a *Community Engagement Fair*, featuring LGBTQ+-affirming companies and presenting students with volunteer, internship, and career opportunities. Additionally, the center has hosted multiple guest speaker events to provide role models for students. For instance, in early 2025, a psychologist and professor was invited to deliver a public lecture. Furthermore, the center's ongoing initiatives actively support both the mental and physical well-being of students, as previously discussed. Events such as galas and community dinners have also been organized to meet the diverse needs of LGBTQ+ students on campus, further reinforcing the center's commitment to inclusivity and student engagement.

In Section 2.3, the evaluation focused on several key aspects: the clarity and organizational structure of the program, its effectiveness in fostering both academic and personal growth among LGBTQ+ students, and the extent of its collaboration with other departments on campus. At this institution, the LGBTQ+ center is required to plan events at least one quarter in advance, ensuring that they are both engaging and meaningful. Recently, the center has organized events that highlight the historical significance of the surrounding neighborhood as well as the center itself, contributing to a broader understanding of the LGBTQ+ community's local and institutional history. All approved events are systematically listed on the center's social media platforms, such as Instagram, allowing students to register in advance. Additionally, the center has demonstrated interdisciplinary collaboration by partnering with the Social Sciences

department to host an event aimed at fostering social connections and increasing awareness of the LGBTQ+ community. Such initiatives reflect the center's commitment to promoting student engagement and cross-departmental cooperation.

From an academic perspective, the events organized by the LGBTQ+ center predominantly align with the social sciences, which explains its collaboration with the Division of Social Sciences. Notably, there is an additional student-led LGBTQ+ center on campus that specifically serves students within the School of Business. Strengthening collaboration between these two centers could enhance interdisciplinary engagement and provide a more comprehensive support network for LGBTQ+ students across various academic disciplines

The LGBTQ+ center organizes a minimum of three to four events per month, providing consistent opportunities for student engagement. Additionally, students have the option to schedule appointments with staff members to discuss any questions, concerns, or specific issues they may wish to address. However, a limitation of the center's programming is the lack of large-scale events that have a broader impact on the entire campus community. As previously mentioned, the center's primary challenge lies in increasing its visibility and influence across the institution. While recent efforts to collaborate with other departments demonstrate progress, there remains significant room for further expansion and institutional integration.

User Experience Analysis

The assessment of user experience was conducted by evaluating each LGBTQ+ center's official website to determine whether it provides sufficient foundational information for students to familiarize themselves with the center and establish contact. Key components of this

evaluation include the presence of the center's history, details on past, current, and upcoming events, information about staff or affiliated members, contact details, and links to social media platforms. The customized evaluation form is in appendix 5.

The official website of this LGBTQ+ center provides a brief introduction to the center along with basic information regarding available resources. Additionally, it includes staff details, contact information, and links to social media platforms. However, a significant drawback is the absence of information on past or upcoming events. While the website contains fundamental details, the overall user experience is diminished due to the lack of event listings. Without this information, students may struggle to fully understand the center's activities and opportunities for involvement. Notably, the center's Instagram page features photos of past events as well as introductions and registration links for upcoming events. However, the omission of these details from the official website creates a disconnect in accessibility and may lead to confusion among students seeking engagement opportunities.

The following chart presents a comparative analysis of the user experience provided by this LGBTQ+ center in relation to five of its peer institutions. For each category, each institution will be assigned a score ranging from 0 to 1, reflecting the extent to which their website effectively provides the necessary information and resources. This analysis highlights areas where improvements can be made to enhance user engagement and ensure students have seamless access to essential resources and opportunities for involvement.

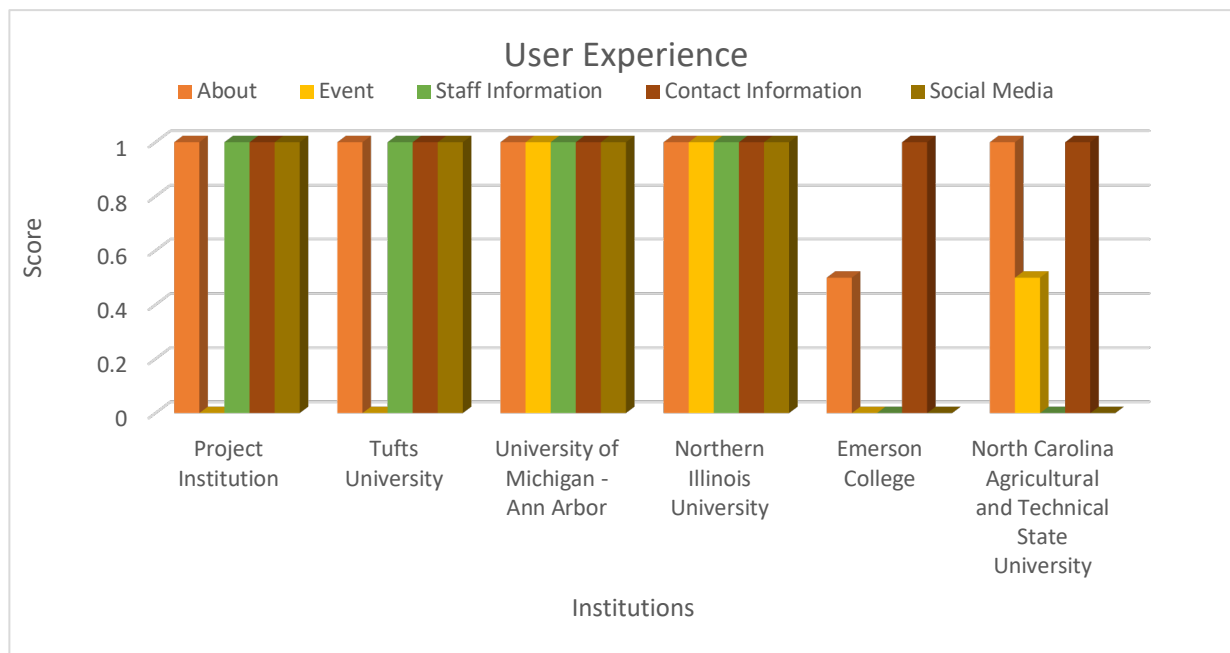


Figure 3. User Experience Ratings

The chart illustrates that this LGBTQ+ center performs well in several key areas, including its introduction section, staff and contact information, and social media presence. The website provides fundamental details necessary for students to understand the center's purpose and available resources. However, the absence of an event section is its disadvantage, as it may hinder student engagement and the center's long-term development. When compared to peer institutions, top-rated centers—such as those at the University of Michigan – Ann Arbor and Northern Illinois University—demonstrate well-organized and highly informative official websites. In contrast, when compared to lower-ranking institutions, this center stands out by providing staff information and a direct link to its social media page. A common trend among several institutions is the missing of event listings on their websites, which may impact accessibility and student involvement.

An exemplary model that other institutions might consider emulating is the Spectrum Center at the University of Michigan – Ann Arbor. The center’s website is meticulously curated, offering extensive information about its operations, including detailed staff profiles, a comprehensive account of its history and core values, as well as visual content showcasing the facility and upcoming as well as important annual events. Additionally, the site outlines the center’s full range of services, such as workshops, consultations, student and community support programs, along with a dedicated news section. It also maintains active links to social media platforms and provides accessible contact information. This dynamic and user-friendly digital presence enhances visibility, fosters a sense of approachability, and strengthens engagement with students, serving as a best-practice example for similar centers aiming to improve outreach and service delivery.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the CPI ratings, comparative analysis with peer institutions, CAS evaluation of event quality, and assessment of user experience, the LGBTQ+ center at this elite private research institution in the Midwest demonstrates a strong foundation and well-established infrastructure. However, there are areas that require further development to enhance its impact and effectiveness. One area for improvement is the connection to the LGBTQ+ alumni group, which would foster greater social connectivity and long-term engagement within the community. Also, while the quality of events hosted by the center is high, their reach and overall campus-wide influence remain limited, highlighting the need for initiatives that promote broader awareness and participation. Additionally, in terms of the user experience, the center’s official

website provides fundamental information but lacks the depth and comprehensiveness seen in other top-rated peer institutions. The absence of event-listing area decreases the vibrancy of the page, as events are a core component of the center's activities.

With all the information given, it is recommended that the center increase collaboration with other departments, aiming for at least one interdisciplinary partnership per month. This quarter, the center has already worked with the Division of Social Sciences, and future collaborations could extend to other divisions. The School of Business is a particularly promising partner, as it has a student-run LGBTQ+ center. However, this center is quite exclusive and primarily serves business students, making a partnership an opportunity to connect both organizations and enhance resource-sharing. Such collaboration would also increase awareness among business students about the broader LGBTQ+ support network available on campus.

The previous collaboration with the Division of Social Sciences included a board game event in the student lounge, open to all students, with food provided and promotional emails distributed by faculty members of the Division of Social Sciences. A similar event, such as a trivia night, could be organized in collaboration with the School of Business. To maximize outreach, the center should leverage social media platforms and encourage the student-run LGBTQ+ center to promote the event via email, targeting both its subscribers and the broader business school community. Additionally, earlier this quarter, the center hosted an event focused on LGBTQ+-friendly organizations and employment opportunities. A joint initiative with the School of Business could build upon this by organizing a job panel discussion. Given the business school's expertise in the job market and the LGBTQ+ center's knowledge of workplace

inclusivity, such an event would be mutually beneficial, addressing both career development and diversity in professional settings.

Although the center has already submitted its event plan for the upcoming quarter, a specific deliverable may still be proposed for consideration in future programming. The plan is that the center organizes a panel discussion and networking event featuring LGBTQ+ alumni from the School of Business who are currently working across a range of industries. The primary objective of this event would be to provide clarity and guidance regarding potential career paths for students who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community, as well as those interested in learning more about LGBTQ+ professional experiences or pursuing work in related fields.

The event could be structured into three to five panel sessions, each focused on a different industry. Each session would last approximately one hour and feature three to four professional speakers. Participation would be open to students across all academic divisions, with advance registration required. In addition to the panel discussions, the event could offer one-on-one coffee chats between students and panelists. These informal conversations would provide students with a 15–20 minute opportunity to ask personalized questions regarding career development, academic pathways, or the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ professionals.

The event would end with an hour-long networking session, allowing for informal mingling between students and professionals. Food and drinks would be provided, with support from both the center and the School of Business. This comprehensive format would foster meaningful connections, enhance career readiness, and promote an inclusive professional environment.

Both the School of Business and the center would manage the promotion of this event through a variety of communication channels. These may include targeted email campaigns, posts on official social media platforms, and the distribution of printed promotional materials such as flyers. To further encourage student participation and enhance visibility, the event could offer various souvenirs. Potential items may include pens, badges, stickers, rubber bracelets, notebooks, pins, and customized canvas tote bags. These giveaways would not only serve as incentives for attendance but also reinforce a sense of community and shared identity among participants.

Furthermore, strengthening connections with alumni would facilitate the expansion of the center's professional network and enhance its outreach capabilities. Additionally, it would be best for the center to revamp its website to feature event listings and pertinent resources, rather than relying on social media platforms such as Instagram, in order to present a more formal, academic-oriented interface.

Also, a student feedback survey (appendix 6) was proposed as no such assessment had been conducted previously. Past efforts have been limited to specific event-based online surveys. Research by Mair and Shah (2011) emphasizes the importance of student feedback as a critical mechanism for evaluating service quality and identifying areas for improvement. A holistic assessment of the center's services, incorporating student feedback, is essential for understanding its current performance and implementing necessary enhancements.

Limitations and Implications

As this project relies on publicly available data, access to certain private documents, such as CAS, may be restricted. Consequently, the findings may not be entirely comprehensive or precise. Additionally, some sections of relevant information may be confidential and therefore excluded from estimation or analysis. However, the available data is sufficient for the scope of this project.

Additionally, the current CPI rating mechanism may not provide an accurate assessment of service effectiveness, as it primarily reflects the presence of a service rather than its quality. For instance, once a center offers a particular service, it automatically receives a full score (5 out of 5), regardless of how well the service is implemented or received. To enhance the reliability and usefulness of the CPI, more nuanced and detailed evaluation criteria should be developed. These should account for both the availability and the quality of services provided. Such improvements would not only benefit this specific center but also serve as a standardized framework for LGBTQ+ centers across colleges nationwide, helping them to identify their disadvantages and improve accordingly.

A key component of this study was initially the implementation of a comprehensive student feedback survey, as no prior assessments of this nature had been conducted. However, due to concerns surrounding student privacy and data sensitivity, the survey was ultimately not administered. Although a proposal was submitted, the strict regulatory framework governing the center presents ongoing challenges to the feasibility of conducting such research, and there remains a possibility that the survey may either not be implemented or only partially carried out. Nevertheless, the insights generated through this research highlight key areas for institutional

improvement. If utilized effectively, these findings could inform strategic enhancements, support requests for increased institutional funding, and ultimately contribute to more responsive and inclusive student services

Moreover, this project aims to highlight the significance of LGBTQ+ centers in higher education institutions and encourage universities to reassess the effectiveness of their on-campus LGBTQ+ centers. The methodologies and recommendations presented in this study may serve as a valuable framework for institutions seeking to enhance their support systems and operational strategies in the future.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Selected CPI Questions

Section Two

Q1: Does your campus have a full-time professional staff member who is employed to support LGBTQ students and increase campus awareness of LGBTQ concerns/issues as 50% or more of the individual's job description?

Q2: Does your campus have an LGBTQ concerns office or an LGBTQ student resource center (i.e., an institutionally funded space specifically for LGBTQ, gender and sexuality education and/or support services)?

Q3: Does your campus have an ongoing Safe Zone, Safe Space and/or ally training program that are offered at a minimum annually to educate students, faculty and/or staff on LGBTQ issues and concerns?

Q4: Does your campus have an ongoing, visible network of people on campus who identify openly as allies/advocates for LGBTQ people and concerns?

Q10: Does your campus have an active, visible LGBTQ alumni group that is supported by the institution's alumni office?

Section Four

Q1: Does your campus regularly offer activities and events to increase awareness of the experiences and concerns of: Lesbians, women loving women, and women who are same-gender loving, Gay men, men loving men, and men who are same-gender loving, Bisexual, pansexual and sexually fluid people, Transgender people, Genderqueer people and people with non-binary gender identities, Asexual people.

Q2: Does your campus regularly hold social events specifically for LGBTQ students? (e.g., queer prom, movie nights, open mic nights, etc.)

Section Seven

Q1: Does your campus offer a support group(s) that assists individuals in the process of acknowledging and disclosing the following identities and their related concerns?

Lesbians, women loving women, and women who are same-gender loving, Gay men, men loving men, and men who are same-gender loving, Bisexual, pansexual and sexually fluid people, Transgender people, Genderqueer people and people with non-binary gender identities, Asexual people.

Q2: Does your campus offer LGBTQ-supportive counseling services, with a staff that is knowledgeable of the needs and experiences of the following identities and their related concerns?

Lesbians, women loving women, and women who are same-gender loving, Gay men, men loving men, and men who are same-gender loving, Bisexual, pansexual and sexually fluid people,

Transgender people, Genderqueer people and people with non-binary gender identities, Asexual people.

Q4: Does your campus actively distribute condoms, dental dams, and LGBTQ-inclusive information on HIV/STI services and resources?

Q5: Does your campus offer free, anonymous, and easily accessible HIV/STI testing on a regular basis?

Appendix 2

Selected CAS Measurements

2.2

- LGBTQ+PS provides programs and services addressing the diverse needs of its constituents.
- LGBTQ+PS promotes and advocates for individual and group psychological counseling services addressing the unique needs of LGBTQ+ students.
- LGBTQ+PS promotes and advocates for health services addressing the unique needs of LGBTQ+ students.
- LGBTQ+PS promotes and advocates for career services addressing the unique needs of LGBTQ+ students, including job search preparation; information on LGBTQ+ friendly employers; employer mentoring programs for LGBTQ+ students; and information on LGBTQ+ issues in the workplace, including coming out and transitioning on the job.

- LGBTQ+PS promotes the identification of and networking with role models and mentors to include conferences and regional connections.

-LGBTQ+PS increases campus awareness of the complex intersectional identities inherent in the lives of the LGBTQ+ students.

-LGBTQ+PS provides programs and services addressing access, diversity, equity, justice, and inclusion.

2.3

- LGBTQ+PS provides a research-informed, theory-informed, or evidence-based rationale for designing programs and services, strategies, and tactics intended to influence student learning, development, and success goals.

-LGBTQ+PS establishes and communicates a clear organizational structure for the implementation of its programs and services.

-Whether as a separate or stand-alone unit, LGBTQ+PS is structured to promote academic and personal growth of LGBTQ+ students.

-LGBTQ+PS collaborates with colleagues and departments across the institution to develop programs and services consistent with the institutional core values and department functions.

Appendix 3

Tailored Performance Assessment Survey Based on CPI

Question	Answer (0-5)
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<p>1-Does your campus have a full-time professional staff member who is employed to support LGBTQ students and increase campus awareness of LGBTQ concerns/issues as 50% or more of the individual's job description?</p>	
<p>2-Does your campus have an LGBTQ concerns office or an LGBTQ student resource center (i.e., an institutionally funded space specifically for LGBTQ, gender and sexuality education and/or support services)?</p>	
<p>3-Does your campus have an ongoing Safe Zone, Safe Space and/or ally training program that are offered at a minimum annually to educate students, faculty and/or staff on LGBTQ issues and concerns?</p>	
<p>4-Does your campus have an ongoing, visible network of people on campus who identify openly as allies/advocates for LGBTQ people and concerns?</p>	
<p>5-Does your campus have an active, visible LGBTQ alumni group that is supported by the institution's alumni office?</p>	
<p>6-Does your campus regularly offer activities and events to increase awareness of the experiences and concerns of: Lesbians, women loving women, and women who are same-gender loving, Gay men, men loving men, and men</p>	

<p>who are same-gender loving, Bisexual, pansexual and sexually fluid people, Transgender people, Genderqueer people and people with non-binary gender identities, Asexual people.</p>	
<p>7- Does your campus regularly hold social events specifically for LGBTQ students? (e.g., queer prom, movie nights, open mic nights, etc.)</p>	
<p>8- Does your campus offer a support group(s) that assists individuals in the process of acknowledging and disclosing the following identities and their related concerns?</p> <p>Lesbians, women loving women, and women who are same-gender loving, Gay men, men loving men, and men who are same-gender loving, Bisexual, pansexual and sexually fluid people, Transgender people, Genderqueer people and people with non-binary gender identities, Asexual people.</p>	
<p>9- Does your campus offer LGBTQ-supportive counseling services, with a staff that is knowledgeable of the needs and experiences of the following identities and their related concerns?</p>	

Lesbians, women loving women, and women who are same-gender loving, Gay men, men loving men, and men who are same-gender loving, Bisexual, pansexual and sexually fluid people, Transgender people, Genderqueer people and people with non-binary gender identities, Asexual people.	
10- Does your campus actively distribute condoms, dental dams, and LGBTQ-inclusive information on HIV/STI services and resources?	
11- Does your campus offer free, anonymous, and easily accessible HIV/STI testing on a regular basis?	

Appendix 4

Tailored Event Quality Evaluation Survey Based on CAS

Question	Answer (Compliant, Not-Compliant, Insufficient Evidence, Not Applicable, and justification)
1- LGBTQ+PS provides programs and services addressing the diverse needs of its constituents.	
2- LGBTQ+PS promotes and advocates for individual and group psychological	

counseling services addressing the unique needs of LGBTQ+ students.	
3- LGBTQ+PS promotes and advocates for health services addressing the unique needs of LGBTQ+ students.	
4- LGBTQ+PS promotes and advocates for career services addressing the unique needs of LGBTQ+ students, including job search preparation; information on LGBTQ+ friendly employers; employer mentoring programs for LGBTQ+ students; and information on LGBTQ+ issues in the workplace, including coming out and transitioning on the job.	
5- LGBTQ+PS promotes the identification of and networking with role models and mentors to include conferences and regional connections.	
6- LGBTQ+PS increases campus awareness of the complex intersectional identities inherent in the lives of LGBTQ+ students.	

<p>7- LGBTQ+PS provides programs and services addressing access, diversity, equity, justice, and inclusion.</p>	
<p>8- LGBTQ+PS provides a research-informed, theory-informed, or evidence-based rationale for designing programs and services, strategies, and tactics intended to influence student learning, development, and success goals.</p>	
<p>9- LGBTQ+PS establishes and communicates a clear organizational structure for the implementation of its programs and services.</p>	
<p>10- Whether as a separate or stand-alone unit, LGBTQ+PS is structured to promote academic and personal growth of LGBTQ+ students.</p>	
<p>11- LGBTQ+PS collaborates with colleagues and departments across the institution to develop programs and services consistent with the institutional core values and department functions.</p>	

Appendix 5

Customized User Experience Survey

Field	Basic Information ("About Us")	Event Information	Staff Information	Contact Information	Social Media Information
Rating (0-1)					

Appendix 6

Proposed Student Feedback Survey

This student feedback survey is designed as a preliminary framework which can be adjusted by the center to suit their specific needs prior to implementation. Its implementation is subject to Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval as well as authorization from the university administration. The survey is designed based on the center's prior event-specific online surveys and aims to gather student input effectively. To maximize accessibility and participation, the most effective distribution method would be to provide a QR code within the center and a direct link on its official website.

Question	Answer
How old are you?	Short-text Answer
What is your major?	Short-text Answer

<p>Are you an undergraduate or a graduate student?</p>	<p>Multiple Choice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undergraduate • Graduate
<p>What is your gender</p> <p>What is your sexual orientation?</p>	<p>Short-text Answer</p>
<p>Have you ever received any ally training?</p> <p>If yes, where was the training provided?</p>	<p>Yes/No</p> <p>Short-text Answer</p>
<p>Do you think there is a safe space on campus?</p>	<p>Short-text Answer</p>
<p>Have you ever received any mental health help on campus?</p> <p>If yes, where was it provided? What kind of help?</p>	<p>Yes/No</p> <p>Short-text Answer</p>
<p>Have you ever received any STD-related (such as HIV test or free condom) physical health help on campus?</p> <p>If yes, where was it provided?</p>	<p>Yes/No</p> <p>Short-text Answer</p>
<p>Have you ever heard of the LGBTQ+ center on campus / Are you aware of the existence of the on-campus LGBTQ+ center?</p>	<p>Yes/No</p> <p>Yes/No</p>
<p>How did you hear of this center?</p>	<p>Short-text Answer</p>

<p>Have you ever attended any events hosted by this center?</p> <p>If yes, what kind of event was it?</p> <p>How many events have you been to?</p> <p>How did you like those events (please rate them from 1 (didn't like them at all) to 10 (love them so much)?</p>	<p>Yes/No</p> <p>Short-text Answer</p> <p>Short-text Answer</p> <p>Short-text Answer</p>
<p>Which event do you like the most? And why? (optional)</p>	<p>Short-text Answer</p>
<p>Do you look forward to attending more of this center's event?</p>	<p>Yes/No</p>
<p>What kind of events do you expect to attend?</p>	<p>Short-text Answer</p>
<p>Do you have any suggestions for their event planning? (optional)</p>	<p>Short-text Answer</p>
<p>What is your impression of the staff member of the center?</p> <p>What is your overall impression of the center?</p>	<p>Short-text Answer</p> <p>Short-text Answer</p>
<p>Do you find the center's official website useful?</p> <p>In what ways?</p>	<p>Yes/No</p> <p>Short-text Answer</p>

Do you have any suggestions on their website design?	Short-text Answer
Do you like this center's social media pages? Please rate from 1 (do not like at all) to 5 (like it very much) Facebook Instagram Or I have never accessed the center's social media pages	Short-text Answer
Do you have any suggestions or comments on the center's performance? (optional)	Short-text Answer