

The Women's Center

AS Office of Assessment
Structure & Program Advisory Committee



AS The AS Assessments
2012 Board of Directors 2012 Boards



The AS Women's Center is one of seven offices under the umbrella of Associated Students Resource and Outreach Programs. The office deals with Issues ranging from women's health to domestic violence, and generally bolsters campus-wide dialogue on issues of gender.

The Women's Center presented to SPAC on January 13, 2012. Their current mission statement is as follows:

The WC exists to provide the Vassar community with support, the opportunity to exchange ideas and become more aware of world issues through programming, peer referral, and resource development. It is a safe space and a campusically, politically, historically, and socially relevant issue and an integral part of the WC.

Programs/Services Provided

The office uses several mediums to package the Issues pertinent to them, employing community marches, personal monologue showcases, written publications, art exhibitions, and other means of creatively addressing the Issues of gender, power, politics, health, expression, and their crossroads Inherent In our society.

Notable events from recent years Include the "Vagina Memoirs," akin to Eve Ensler's "Vagina Monologues." The show covers myriad gender Issues such as personal self-image, power-based violence, as well as sexual, racial, and religious topics; the "Women's Night at the Ree Center" event promotes community building through a number of activities, from team sports to self-defense; "Elect Her," returning to campus for 2012, focuses on addressing the gender gap In political leadership at all levels.

Many more services and events are provided by the office, Including a library, safe space, and community resource advisement.

Strategic Recommendations

1) Change the office's mission statement from the aforementioned to the following:

The Women's Center is committed to supporting, educating, and connecting people on campus and around the world. We provide a safe space for people to share their experiences, and we promote equality, diversity, and solidarity against violence for people of all identities.

2) Advise that Women's Center personnel create training to enhance the office's ability to provide safe space to students.

In order to effectively serve students when they come in to the office for one-on-one discussions about any number of subjects relating to the office mission, it is crucial to have skills and tools including but not limited to: active listening, establishing healthy boundaries with clients, knowing what resources and referrals are most appropriate to suggest, and being knowledgeable about issues relating to gender. All these facets should be the focus of safe space maintenance in the future.

3) Recommend the implementation of a consent and bystander safety curriculum and program.

The Women's Center will create a curriculum to be presented in a variety of settings including at Associated Students trainings, in residence halls, and other appropriate venues. The goal of this curriculum is to raise awareness about what consent is and how to ensure it is acquired, and what practical steps to take in relevant social settings (e.g. at parties, bars, other public places) to make people comfortable with bystander intervention which is critical to the safety of students.

4) Emphasize the need for a better developed and further structured internship program.

As the internship program stands now, it is productive and valuable but not as structured or developed as it could be. It is important to ensure that the office can have intern positions even when the coordinators are less experienced. There need to be more defined outcomes and goals at the outset, from the application process onward.

5) Suggest the transfer of relevant resources to the office webpage to make them useable.

The Women's Center has under-utilized technology to communicate with those who want to use the office. Should they fully utilize their webpage, the office could become an even more prominent entity on campus. Adding resources relevant to the Women's Center, all campus events relating to gender equality and women's empowerment, and information about the office, will make it more accessible.

6) Advise a tailored internal assessment process for the *Labyrinth* journal.

An assessment should be conducted, incorporating feedback from journal contributors as well as readers, in order to determine the learning/programmatic impact of the publication and strategize to improve experiences for those who fill the publication's pages and well as those who experience the work of community artists.

This additional evaluative opportunity will help the program's Support Staff to understand the needs of the community and of artists over recent years, and can be used to guide future modulations to the *Labyrinth* publication.

It is important for all aspects of an office's operations to have these conversations about strategy, priority, and capacity, but this is especially relevant to the field of wide-scale publications.

7) Recommend a change of the hourly Women's Center Program Support Staff position to a salaried position.

There has been on-going discussion as to whether the current hourly Women's Center Program Support Staff position would be structured better as a salaried position. The position would be required to attend fall and spring trainings and ROP meetings among other activities that are beneficial but not directly related to service delivery. A change of this type would allow for a more dynamic office structure. Trainings and meetings are an essential part of accomplishing job description requirements such as establishing and maintaining working relationships, knowledge of resources and safe space accommodations, and so on. The position restructure would allow for a consistent emphasis on creative programming throughout the entire academic year, and would make the realization of Recommendation 6 much more feasible.