

2015 Associated Students

Social Issues Resource Center

AS Structure and Program Advisory Committee

Assessment Program
Proposed Recommendations



1) **Start conversation around making room for more office hours during departmental training at the start of the year.**

As it stands, AS Fall training is two weeks prior to fall quarter and seeks to give employees an opportunity to get learn more about the organization and their departments. However, we believe, based on our experience, that there should be more time for employees to spend in their offices, especially for offices that only have staff that are employed for 3 quarters. One of the bigger roles has the SIRC on Western's campus is to create programming that is centered on the issues that students are passionate about. The broad scope of the Social Issues Resource Center makes it difficult to gauge student interests right away, while we also have a very short window between when school starts and when we should be doing our first event, which is ideally no more than a month or two into the quarter. To remedy this, it would be useful to have more in-the-office time during training to learn the position and office, as well as prepare for the first responsibilities of the quarter. Beginning conversations around this strategic development with the Personnel office and departmental director of Resource and Outreach Programs (ROP) give our office more time to build a more solid and organized foundation for the rest of the quarter and year. It is vital that the SIRC provide meaningful programming and dialogue on this campus, and this is reliant on the strength and interpersonal communication in the office.

- We recommend meeting with the Resource and Outreach Programs director to explore the possibility of incorporating more office time for the SIRC and other ROP offices.
- During these proposed extra office hours, it is recommended that SIRC staff spend that time:
 - o Researching speakers on various issues
 - o Going through previous programming legacy documents to better understand the process of event planning
 - o Going through resources (i.e., zines, archived files etc) and learning about the issues that the SIRC has been keeping up with
 - o Ideally, starting to plan out when their office should be holding events throughout the quarter
 - o Having time to reflect on the internship with other SIRC staff to build on what staff learned there

2) **Implementing at least 2 hours of "Community Check-In's"**

Due to the nature of the Social Issues Resource Center and the broad definition of how this office can function to serve students and the Social Issues that they are passionate about, it is important for SIRC staff to be well-informed and connected with the broad range of student issues. Because the SIRC is part of the Resource and Outreach Programs (ROP), we are an office that is trained to have safe space. However, the SIRC is not an office that focuses on any particular identities and as such, isn't necessarily heavily utilized for much peer advising in the same

way as most of the other offices in the ROP. While the SIRC staff would spend 10 hours in their regular office hours, it would be extremely beneficial to have an hour or two to be attending clubs (that pertain to Social Issues & Activism) to not only foster community between the SIRC and on-campus organizations, but also for the SIRC to make sure they are providing programming that is aligned with student interests and concerns.

- Each week the SIRC, as a collective staff, should satisfy 2 hours of "Community Check-in". For example, if one week the Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator satisfy an hour, then that would meet the requirement.
- During the Check-In's, it is recommended that the SIRC staff be taking notes in a "Community Check-in" log. This can be utilized during the follow-up conversation that the SIRC staff can have, whenever they see fit, to dialogue about the check-ins, each week.

3) **Implement a mission statement that puts more emphasis on education, empowerment, and action**

For many offices, the mission statement helps them focus each event and the way that their office functions. The past mission statement of the SIRC lacks a clear direction and creates a very broad scope for the office's mission.

"The Social Issues Resource Center (SIRC) is responsible for raising awareness about social issues, including those not commonly represented in the mainstream media, and inspiring students to be more active and engaged citizens. The SIRC facilitates the sharing of diverse perspectives by providing resources, information, and the coordination of events. It also serves as a networking center for related AS clubs and community organization"

While this mission statement gives the SIRC an advantage as far as creating programming on anything that is a social issue, it also hinders the SIRC because it doesn't provide a clear focus. Here is our suggested new mission statement:

"The Social Issues Resource Center (SIRC) aims to foster critical thought on social issues, particularly those faced by marginalized communities, and empower students to take action for change. The SIRC facilitates the sharing of diverse perspectives and student growth by providing resources, information, and educational and community-building events, and a space to engage in meaningful dialogue.

4) **Advocate for 1-2 SIRC staff attending an annual conference prior to the beginning of their positions"**

Currently, the SIRC is working on drafting a new mission statement that will put more of an emphasis on "fostering activism", which is an extension of the current focus of the SIRC - to bring more attention to underrepresented issues. As such, it is

important that we are equipping our staff to uphold these values throughout their time in the SIRC office. Facilitating engagement in activism is something that takes training and experience. Therefore, we are proposing that SIRC staff attempt to attend an educational conference in summer or fall quarter in order to gain useful, office-specific training to prepare staff for their jobs and the coming year.

Conferences like the United States Student Association Congress & Legislative Conference are great opportunities to train the SIRC staff on grassroots and legislative organizing, as well as how to pass that knowledge on to students on their respective campuses. Pursuing these conferences for 1-2 SIRC staff would be a great investment in the overall success of the SIRC, as they would gain invaluable knowledge and guidance within the work of activism. While the conference mentioned above is a strong example, staff could identify other, more local conferences to attend. We envision SIRC staff making proposals to the AS Student Staff Development Fund; though the SIRC would consequently not be guaranteed to have sufficient funds to attend a conference every year, this fund is the most realistic financial source for this recommendation.

We believe it is important that we send two people to this conference so that the information and tools are reaching more than one persxn. Also, it would be a requirement that each of the individuals that attended the conference give a presentation or come up with a creative platform to disseminate the information to the larger student body and community of Western.