

# AS Womxn's Center Restructuring Proposal

Prepared by: Abby Ramos (ROP Director) & Casey Hayden (Coordinator of Student Activities)

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## Summary of Proposal

In this proposal you will find all the necessary components to renew the Womxn's Center and make it more able to meet the needs of current and future students, including: a name change, statement of purpose change, and position description changes. These changes have come out of a long period of research and collaboration between folks inside and outside the AS. The WC is one of the oldest unchanged programs in the AS. With these changes being proposed we thoroughly believe the center would be able to better serve womxn, womxn of color, and other marginalized folks on campus.

## Background & Context:

### Timeline of Restructuring

**Fall 2015** - Womxn's Center (still officially named the AS Women's Center) begins the AS Assessment Process ("SPAC")

**Winter 2016** - After completing about half of the required sections of documentation for SPAC, the office gets approval to remove itself from this process in order to do a longer and more thorough study of the needs of current students and to initiate a broader overhaul of the program than is typical for SPAC.

The idea is raised of hiring a specific employee to conduct assessment and light research to make progress toward this restructuring.

Several mission-oriented and philosophical conversations are had between WC staff and advisor to name the challenges facing the program.

WC Coordinator, Elva Nitereka, begins gathering feedback from woman-identified students, primarily students of color, on what their perceived needs are from a campus womxn's center. Elva holds a listening session event for this purpose.

**Spring 2016 -** Funding was secured and a position description drafted and approved for the temporary "AS Women's Center Research Assistant" position that would work over the summer to maintain the positive momentum of the WC restructuring and assessment.

At the very end of the quarter, Elva Nitereka, who had graduated that quarter, was hired for this newly-created non-student, part-time position, slated for 150 hours of work to be completed during the summer.

**Summer 2016 -** Elva conducted assessment and research with frequent check-ins with Casey, the ROP advisor. She gathered input from past employees, synthesized the meaning of several articles and campus research studies, and compiled a final report that provided strong guidance for the staff continuing the redesign work in this current academic year.

In early August, Elva completed the position and shared findings with Abby (incoming ROP Director), Aleyda Cervantes (VP for Diversity), and Casey (ROP Advisor).

**Fall 2016 -** New WC staff is informed about the on-going challenges and feedback from past years' student employees and is asked to begin thinking about mission changes and reformatting the office.

Elva's work is shared with the current WC staff.

**Winter 2017 -** Abby read and distilled the major points of a book on campus women centers called *University and College Women's Center: a journey toward equity*

Casey utilized and disseminated the information found in the CAS Standards for campus women & gender equity centers (CAS = Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education).

The ROP Restructuring Committee holds a half-day "retreat" (in the VU on Sunday, February 5) to put substantial collective brain power into making a great progress on restructuring the Womxn's Center. With the help of the full committee, the full WC staff, Women, Gender, & Sexuality Studies professor Vicki Hsueh, and one student at-large from Vicki's WGSS classes, we were able to accomplish a great deal, culminating in this proposal.

**Background & Context:****Recent Trends and Evolutions of the Womxn's Center**

- Desire for a name change for the program for a few years, with informal adoption of "Womxn's Center" in Winter/Spring 2015
- Since Fall 2014, a significant increase in the number of WC staff who are students of color, resulting in a much-needed and successful shift in programming to center non-white, non-affluent, and non-U.S.-born voices and experiences (while there is, of course, more work to be done in this direction)
- Intentional shift to reduce the number of events being programmed and attempt to increase the attention given to advocacy and maintaining updated resource information
- Altering the Vagina Memoirs event to drop the word "vagina" to increase inclusion, and to no longer hold the large-scale public performance and instead allow cast members to express themselves via a gallery exhibition
- Examining barriers to participation in the Labyrinth journal publication for potential exclusionary or elitist structures that might inhibit a wide representation of submissions to the journal
- Merging the programming of Memoirs and Labyrinth into one experience for students as well as one position to implement that program

**Background & Context:****On-going Challenges / Areas of Need in the Womxn's Center**

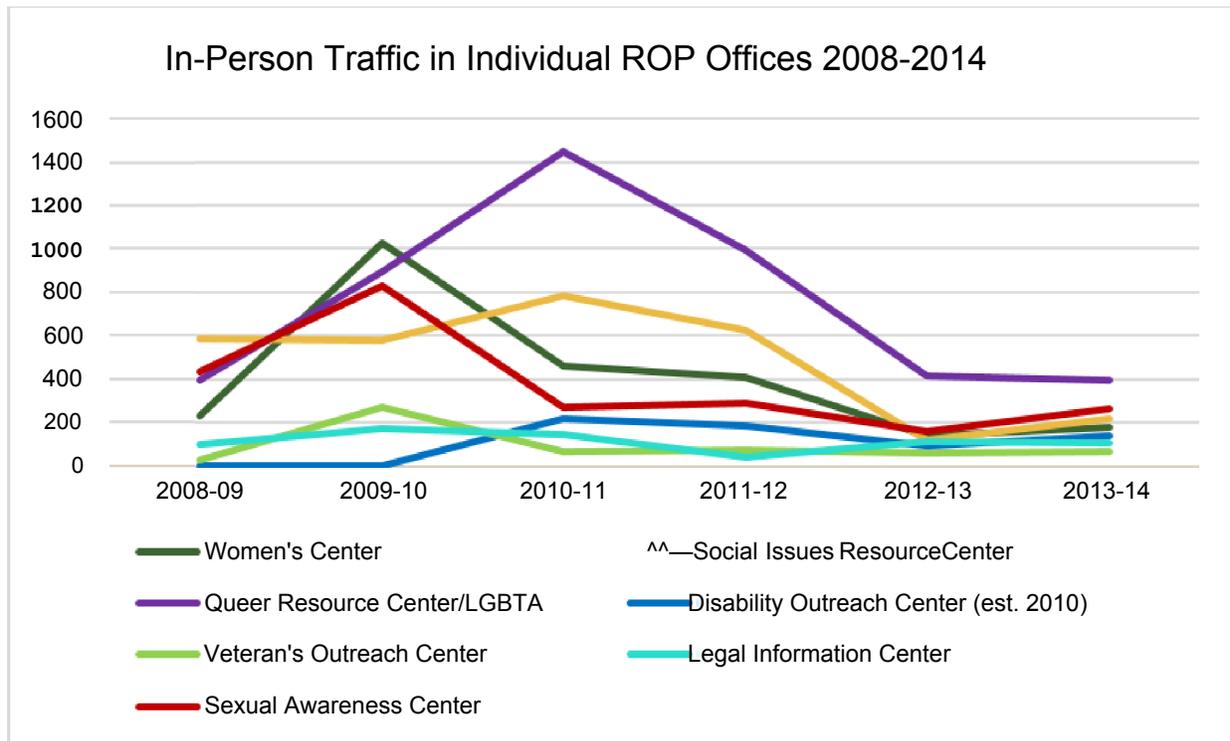
These 10 items have consistently been echoed across two and half years of Womxn's Center staff. These became the basis for the February 2017 retreat.

1. Greater Focus on Advocacy (over programming)
2. Updated Library/Resources
3. New Name/New Mission
4. Better Training for WC Staff on Peer Support/Advising
5. Programming Fewer Events
6. More Professional Staff Support
7. Improved Facility for the Center (more inviting, warm, fosters healing, less bureaucratic)
8. Focus Beyond Cis, White, Hetero Experiences
9. Increase Utilization by Students
10. Better Outreach Efforts to Students/Campus

**Background & Context:**  
**Resources & Evidence Drawn Upon in this Process**

QUANTITATIVE & STATISTICAL

Womxn's Center	# of events	# fall	# winter	# spring	# co-sponsored	attendance
2005-06	19	6	9	5	10	3,761
2006-07	21	8	7	6	10	5,200
2007-08	25	9	8	8	11	3,475
2008-09	21	5	7	9	5	3,194
2009-10	25	6	7	12	16	4,721
2010-11	16	6	7	3	9	3,187
2011-12	20	5	7	8	17	4,816
2012-13	16	6	3	7	8	3,737
2013-14	14	4	6	4	10	2,501
2014-15	13	3	8	5	7	2,454
2015-16	8	3	5	1	5	1,680



## QUALITATIVE / ANECDOTAL

- Student staff feel under-prepared / Insufficiently trained to handle peer advising when students are in crisis
- Resource library contains many outdated books (progress has been made to remove these)
- The office space does not function well for comfortable, community-building space, or really anything other than workstations
- Event programming tends to over-shadow advocacy efforts
- The office needs to shift to more clearly demonstrate its commitment to gender inclusion (e.g. gender non-conforming, trans students, agender, etc.)
- The office won't be able to do serious and meaningful feminist work that includes perspectives that are transnational, immigrant inclusive, healing, and decolonizing until the space is transformed into one that is more warm, welcoming, and able to let staff members flourish in a healthy workspace that doesn't treat student employees like raw materials set to produce a defined product.
  - There should be more outreach and collaboration with various offices and departments that intersect with the work of the WC, such as CEED, ESC, WGSS, CASAS/PWS, Blue Group.

## REFERENCE MATERIALS

- Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (September 8, 2015), 9<sup>th</sup> Edition
- University and College Women's Center: a journey toward equity
- Evans, S. Y. (2007). Women of Color in Higher Education. National Education Association (NEA): Thought and Action. Retrieved from [https://www.nea.org/assets/docs/TAA\\_07\\_13.pdf](https://www.nea.org/assets/docs/TAA_07_13.pdf)
- Linder, C., Rodriguez, K.L. (2012). Learning from the Experiences of Self-Identified Women of Color Activists. Journal of College Student Development. John Hopkins University Press, 53(3), 383-398. doi: 10.1353/csd.2012.0048
- Rakin, S. R., Reason, R.D. (2005). Differing perceptions: How students of color and white students perceive campus climate for underrepresented groups. Journal of College and student development, 46(1). Retrieved from <http://www.brynmawr.edu/diversitycouncil/documents/Rankin.pdf>
- Shabazz, K.A. (2015). Black Women white Campus: Students Living through invisibility Retrieved from [https://scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/2022/19819/Shabazz\\_indiana\\_0093A\\_13420.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/2022/19819/Shabazz_indiana_0093A_13420.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)
- Oregon State University, University of Washington, Washington State University, Central Washington University, Eastern Washington University, Portland State University, University of California-Santa Cruz, Davis, University of Wisconsin

## **Name Change**

Currently the "AS Women's Center" is not all inclusive of many identities, and serves mainly white cis-women. We believe it is important to begin with a name change that creates better opportunity for students to see what we offer. We are proposing to change the center to "**AS Womxn's Identity Resource Center (WIRC)**". This name best represents the new center, in focusing on identities other than white women, it gives room for what the center really is (a resource), and also tries to combat patriarchy within language.

Other names considered but found less appealing were:

- a. Womxn & Gender Resource Center
- b. Womxn, Gender, & Sexuality Center
- c. Womxn & Gender Justice/Race Center
- d. Womxn's Intersectional Resource Center
- e. Womxn's Identity Resource & Advocacy Center
- f. Womxn's Identity Justice Center

## **Statement of Purpose Change**

Current: "The AS Women's Center is committed to supporting, educating and connecting all people on campus around gender related interests and issues. We provide a safe space to share experiences, resources and referrals, and programs that raise awareness and spark dialogue. The WC promotes gender equality, solidarity against violence and a healthy, inclusive culture for people of all identities."

Nowhere in the current mission does the word "womxn" even come up. It is most definitely important to also change the purpose of the center.

New: The AS Womxn's Identity Resource Center (WIRC) supports and enables students who hold marginalized gender identities and expressions to fully and actively participate on WWU's campus. We strive to build a community that promotes: exploration of identities through an intersectional lens; solidarity against violence; and critical thinking around gender, race/culture, class and social issues. We invite you to join us in our resistance.

## Overview of Position Changes

Currently we have three allocated positions in the center

1. WC Coordinator
2. WC Assistant Coordinator
3. WC Asst. Coordinator for Creative programming

We believe these positions do not best fit what the WC could be. The positions are also not fully clear on who is to do what and there is often confusion over job responsibilities because of similarities. The new positions we are proposing are:

1. WIRC Coordinator [add one line summaries for each role]
2. WIRC Advocacy/Peer Support Coordinator
3. WIRC Events Coordinator
4. WIRC Creative Identity Programming Assistant

## Fiscal Impact

Our intent is to request a 3-year grant to pay the annual salary (at Asst. Coordinator level) for the WIRC Advocacy/Peer Support Coordinator position. This would allow an easy approval of this new position without an immediate impact on the operational budget, while building in a wise step of requiring that the position and new structure be re-examined in the third year to determine if and how it should then be operationalized.

Total for the 3 years of grant funding being requested: AMOUNT (and small programming fund - printing 50, office resources 150, advocacy committee meeting food occasional 150)

Asst, coord. Salary - x 3 =

Programming for Advocacy - \$350 x 3 = \$1050.00

The other three positions will correspond to the same pay rates at the three existing positions (1- Coordinator level and 2- Asst. Coordinators).

## Suggested Motions for the Board of Directors

Motion 1: To change the name of the AS Women's Center to the AS Womxn's Identity Resource Center and to update the AS Program Standards and all other official documents containing the program's name as such.

Motion 2: To change the statement of purpose of the AS Women's Center to the statement put forth in this proposal and to update the AS Program Standards and all other official documents containing the program's name as such.

Motion 3 (maybe just a statement is fine on this, not a motion?): To accept (support?) the proposed position changes in this proposal and to direct the ROP Director and Advisor to bring to the Board completely revised job descriptions once the Personnel Committee has reviewed the documents.

Motion 4: To approve the amount of XXX as a grant from the AS Reserve fund to fund 3 years of salary for the new WIRC Advocacy/Peer Support Coordinator position with the understanding that the position will be reassessed in the third year.