LGBTQA Resource Office Name Change Benchmarking:
A Review of National Listings of Offices/Centers & Compilation of Responses from the
Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals
Submitted by Kerry Poynter, Director – LGBTQA Resource Office
University of Illinois Springfield
July 2017

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Summary

LGBTQA Resource Office Name Change Benchmarking
Review of National Listings of Offices/Centers & Compilation of Responses
Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals
By Kerry Poynter – Director, LGBTQA Resource Office, University of Illinois Springfield.

- This document explains a review of all the office names across the country, responses from offices that have changed the name to “Gender & Sexuality”, and compiles responses from the Consortium listserv. A number of institutions have or are considering a name change in order to be more inclusive of the breadth of sexual orientations and gender identities. All have consented to their responses being shared in this document.
- A small majority (55%) of offices (151) still use LGBT(Q) and some have added letters to extend the acronym to LGBTQIA+, some of these have indicated a desire to change from the acronym all together as it still does not accurately represent everyone.
- 123 offices (45%) are using a different name that does not rely on the acronym
- Decision to not use the acronym is to be more inclusive of all sexualities and genders
- Some who no longer use the acronym in the name, such as “Pride Center” or “Queer Resources”, do not use the words gender and sexuality.
- 31 Offices are using “Gender and Sexuality” or similar, some were changed to this name in order to be more inclusive of all sexualities and genders while others were originally established with that name within the last few years.
- Women’s Centers exist alongside these 31, or within, or these services are part of others professional responsibilities in another unit.
LGBTQA Resource Office Name Change Justification FY 18
Submitted by Kerry Poynter, June 2017

Name Change: “Gender & Sexuality Student Services” or “Sexuality & Gender Student Services”
Potential Byline: “Serving the LGBTQIA+ and two-spirit student community and their cisgender & heterosexual allies.”

Summary
This proposed name change will more accurately represent the educational and inclusionary efforts of the office. An attempt to represent a spectrum of identities including pansexuals, genderqueers, and all others that are breaking the binary of a limiting description of sexual orientation and gender identity. Other higher education institutions such as UIC are already renaming. This name change will also be more inclusive of our international populations while eliminating misnaming by campus employees.

The use of the acronym “LGBTQIA+” (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, genderqueer, agender, asexual) has been proliferating the last few years in an attempt to be inclusive of the vast diversity of genders and sexualities present in humanity. The office already educates the campus community about the difference between sex (male, female, intersex) and gender (woman, genderqueer, trans, transgender, man) and sexual orientation (gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, heterosexual) and how each of these falls on a continuum instead of a binary. Within those continuums there are specific terms and they do morph over time as individuals ever explain the vast diversity of human biology and expression. The human species is not a cookie-cutter mold that everyone fits into.

The Acronym & Employee Misnaming

The use of “LGBTQA” does not accurately reflect the sexualities and genders of our student population. We could easily add other letters such as “I” for intersex as about 1 in 100 people have a sex that is not easily categorized as male or female. Another letter could be “P” as numerous students are using pansexual to describe their sexual/romantic attraction to more than two genders. These are just a few examples.

Another issue is how employees are misnaming. Imagine the challenge if we added more letters! Employees on numerous occasions seem to care less about learning how to say the office name correctly and often do in public spaces. These attempts can also include laughter as the name is brushed off as insignificant such as “LGBTABCD, [giggle giggle]”. It is not uncommon for the name to also be incorrectly spelled or a letter left off in print advertising such as posters, job titles, etc. A simple web site search at UIS.EDU would seem the course of action to figure out the correct name, but they choose not to. In Student Affairs, we make a point to make sure
other offices, “Department of Residence Life” and not “Housing” for example, are correct when referred to and this name change will help to enable that.

**Programs & initiatives**

This proposed name change will more accurately represent the educational and inclusionary efforts of the office. This change will not effect programming as the office is already operating with inclusion in a number of ways. For example, Safe Zone educates with intent of breaking the binaries and constantly is updating terminology. The vast array of educational speakers and events over the past 7+ years have purposely covered the gamut of identities and will continue to do so. This past spring semester, the long running “Explore Yourself” support/dialogue group was morphed into two groups: “Fluidity” (to represent many possible sexualities/genders) and “Shades” to provide intentional space to discuss the intersections of race/ethnicity with sexual and gender minorities.

**UIC Benchmarking**

*Our sister campus at the University of Illinois Chicago (UIC) changed their name to Gender & Sexuality Center a few years back for the same reason mentioned in this proposal. UIC also continues to have a Women’s Leadership & Resource Center and coordinator.*

“The Gender and Sexuality Center at UIC creates a more inclusive campus and catalyzes positive social change by challenging heteronormativity and promoting deeply engaged and life affirming thinking, learning, and action.” The center “serve(S) students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members throughout Chicago of all gender identities, gender expressions, and sexual orientations.”

**International Students**

The use of the acronym or labels such as “lesbian” or “gay,” can hold Western and White cultural significance for some people of color or international students. Some languages use much different labels or have none at all. Native American cultures use numerous terms such as “Two-spirit” or “Winkte”. Traditional Polynesian, Central and South American as well as Indian and African cultures use a vast variety of words that do not correspond or are not easily transferable.

**Student Voices**

*I feel the change in name will help to allow everyone to feel welcome, regardless of gender or sexuality. With the previous name, many newly discovered sexual orientations and gender identities are left out. With the change, everyone including allies to the community can feel welcome in the space.* – Mel Clark, Undergraduate

*Changing the name of the office to Gender and Sexuality student services allows for our resource office to be more inclusive of all identities that may not get highlighted*
as often. Changing the name of the office will create a safe space for any identity and further validating their existence. – Adam Tomaszewski, Undergraduate

### Breakdown of Office Names in the Consortium of Higher Education Resource Professionals

31 Offices or Centers have the words “Gender & Sexuality” in the name such as Gender and Sexuality Resource Center” or “Office for Gender and Sexual Diversity”(See Appendix). 123 do not solely use the acronym. This list is found at [http://campuslgbtqcenters.org/listing](http://campuslgbtqcenters.org/listing). Eight of these 31 include traditional Women’s Center resources, sexual assault education, IPV education, and safe dating/sex. (see list below)

Additional Department Names (274 total):

- Combination - Inclusion/Diversity/Women's Center/Multicultural: 37 offices
- LGBTQIA+: 15 offices
- LGBT: 136 offices
- Queer Resource: 15 offices
- Pride Center: 23 offices
- Other - safe zone, sexual minorities, spectrum: 15 offices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University/College</th>
<th>Program/Office Name</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bowdoin College</td>
<td>Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brandeis University (M/I)</td>
<td>Gender and Sexuality Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>California State University (W)</td>
<td>Gender and Sexuality Resource Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carleton College (W)</td>
<td>Gender and Sexuality Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colby College (W)</td>
<td>The Pugh Center - Gender and Sexual Diversity Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duke University</td>
<td>Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elon University (W)</td>
<td>Gender &amp; LGBTQIA Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Macalester College (M/I)</td>
<td>Gender and Sexuality Resource Center (Part of “LGBTQ@Mac” resources)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northern Illinois University (W)</td>
<td>Gender and Sexuality Resource Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northwestern University (M/I)</td>
<td>Gender and Sexuality Resource Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oakland University</td>
<td>Gender and Sexuality Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>SUNY Oneonta (W)</td>
<td>Gender and Sexuality Resource Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tulane University (M/I)</td>
<td>Office for Gender and Sexual Diversity</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Albany - SUNY</td>
<td>Gender and Sexuality Resource Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of British Columbia</td>
<td>Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of California - Santa Barbara</td>
<td>Resource for Sexual and Gender Diversity</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Colorado - Boulder</td>
<td>Gender and Sexuality Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Illinois - Chicago</td>
<td>Gender and Sexuality Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Kansas</td>
<td>Center for Sexuality and Gender Diversity</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Minnesota - Twin Cities</td>
<td>Gender and Sexuality Center for Queer and Trans Life</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Nebraska - Omaha (W)</td>
<td>Gender and Sexuality Resource Center</td>
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<td>University of Northern Colorado</td>
<td>Gender and Sexuality Resource Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Rhode Island</td>
<td>Gender and Sexuality Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of San Francisco (M/I)</td>
<td>Gender and Sexuality Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Southern Maine</td>
<td>Center for Sexualities and Gender Diversity</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Gender and Sexuality Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Toronto</td>
<td>Sexual and Gender Diversity Office</td>
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<td>University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point</td>
<td>Gender and Sexuality Resource Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Washington State University</td>
<td>Gender Identity/Expression and Sexual Orientation Resource Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams College (M/I)</td>
<td>Gender and Sexuality Resource Center</td>
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</tbody>
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Key:
- W = Includes Women's Resources, Sexism education, and/or Sexual Assault & IPV Education
- M/I = Part of Multicultural/Intercultural Office
### Summary of Responses from Gender & Sexuality named Offices/Centers

An email was sent to the 31 offices with “gender” and “sexuality” as part of their name. The following is a compilation of responses. They were asked to respond to three questions: Name with institution size, name change justification, and relationship with campus Women’s Center. These offices are either combined or part of a Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality office, separate from a Women’s Center (with collaboration), or are part of an Intercultural/Diversity center. A few of the responses indicated they did not have a Women’s Center and similar services such as sexual assault/IPV education were coordinated by others.

#### University at Albany

Founded as gender and sexuality

Institution Size: 18,000

There were those around the founding of the center that wanted to have a LGBTQ academic center, ultimately Student Affairs was able to Create a GSRC on our own. We felt gender and sexuality are what societal issues affect the LGBTQ+ community and would allow for the expansion of identity for the future. Additionally when asking students on the podium at random what an LGBT center was vs what was a gender and sexuality center the answers seemed to say that an LGBT center sounded exclusive for just those who identify where as gender and sexuality felt like it was open for more people. Finally after choosing the name we found that many of our student employees, particularly those LGBTQ students of color, reported that they would not have been able to tell there parents that they work at an LGBT center but were able to say they work at a gender and sexuality center.

The women’s center is not a formal entity on our campus, we are trying to work with it (as it is housed in residential life) and bolster the support and resources there.

Hope this helps!

Courtney D’Allaird  
**Assistant Director, Coordinator of the Gender & Sexuality Resource Center**  
University at Albany I Office of Intercultural Student Engagement

#### University of Colorado, Boulder

Our name prior to changing was the GLBTQ Resource Center (which resulted in GLBTQRC which no one understood) and CU Boulder is about 30k students (grad included).
Our reasoning was:
International and minority population students don't always identify or recognize GLBTQ (LGBTQ) and we wanted to be more inclusive of those identities. We wanted to be a more inviting place for allies and felt that G&S is less about identity categories and more about broad subjects. We hope that they will feel more comfortable coming in instead of asking "I don't identify as LGBTQ but my parents are, my sister is, etc. and is it okay to use the space?" We didn't want to add more letters.

We have a very close working relationship with our Women's Resource Center and discussed it with them. They saw no problem with students perhaps seeking services in either or both places as both centers have been very supportive of trans students and some trans students don't want to be associated with LGB folks and would go to the WRC anyways. We actually thought it would be good if students cross-pollinated between the centers whether by choice or by accident as both centers have resources. The WRC did initially wonder about using some language that would be aimed specifically at trans women such as "women identified" in their own materials but in the end we all thought that such language was degrading in some ways and singled out a group of people so the WRC just stuck with the language they have always used around "women."

Hope that helps,
Morgan Seamont
University of Colorado, Boulder

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*Elon University*

1) Our Center was originally Gender & LGBTQ Center in Summer 2013. During my first month, I successfully lobbied to include the “IA” to become Gender & LGBTQIA Center. Institution size is 6,500 students at Elon University (located in Elon, North Carolina between Greensboro & Durham.)

2) The thought to “Gender & LGBTQIA” instead of “Gender & Sexuality” was that the university wanted specific/explicit attention towards advocating for LGBTQIA students, whereas a general “sexuality” may have not shown as direct attention & may be perceived as just making straight people feel better about the name. Additionally, parents may view “sexuality” in the center title and falsely assume we are teaching students how to have sex, rather than focusing on identity, community, culture, history, programming, etc.

3) Elon University has never had a Women’s Center, so we are seen as the primary place and space for gender & sexuality education. The Director has primary expertise across
LGBTQIA topics, and we hired an Assistant Director who focuses heavily on gender-focused initiatives (including education around gender-based violence and prevention related to sexual assault, stalking, relationships, etc.) While I serve on all of the LGBTQIA-related campus committees, we both have seats on the academic faculty-run Women’s, Gender, and Sexualities Studies Advisory Council as well as the Sexual Assault & Gender Issues Council.

Hope this helps!
--Matthew Antonio

Matthew Antonio Bosch
Director of the Gender & LGBTQIA Center – Elon University

_University of Illinois Chicago_

Original name was The Office of GLBT Concerns (OGLBTC). Office of GLB Concerns -> Office of GLBT Concerns -> Gender and Sexuality Center. Institution size: 29,100 total enrollment (undergrad, grad, and professional students; 2016)

After discussion with students and the Chancellor’s Committee on the Status of LGBT Issues (former name), the director was looking for a new name. A number of possibilities (over 15) were offered. In the end, the Gender and Sexuality Center was selected, where it’s about concepts, instead of people per se. Being a public, research I school, I think this also helped to consider the research on these topics. I actually remember more of a longer discussion on being an – office, center, or institute and the placement of this word – as they denote different things. Lastly, because the office had GLBT, I think there was some discussion about needing to include additional communities/letters. Although we ended up with the Gender and Sexuality Center, we also tried to have a tag line of “LGBTQ Education, Outreach, Research, and Support” to better communicate what we did. I forget why we didn’t add the I (intersex) or A (ally or asexual). Probably our own ignorance and/or keeping with trends. There was also a lot of discussion if we had to use the “and” or we could use the “&.” In the end, it came down to UIC’s formatting standards. I don’t remember discussion between “gender, gender identity, and gender expression.” Although we as professionals know the nuance, perhaps we thought the general public didn’t.

Our Women’s Center used to be called the Office of Women’s Affairs and then more recently changed to the Women’s Leadership and Resource Center. With either name, I don’t think there was a lot of confusion. If anything, all the units reporting under the now named Centers for Cultural Understanding and Social Change, it’s good to be able to have different people come to you by different ways – even if some of it’s from confusion. We all refer and connect people to each other.
Megan Carney

Director / Gender and Sexuality Center
University of Illinois at Chicago

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University of Texas Austin

Gender and Sexuality Center we then added Serving Women & LGBTQA Communities a year later we serve about 50,000 students. We are both a women’s center and an LGBTQ center and it was concise.

http://diversity.utexas.edu/genderandsexuality/

The mission of the Gender and Sexuality Center (GSC) is to provide opportunities for all members of the UT Austin community to explore, organize, and promote learning around issues of gender and sexuality. The center also facilitates a greater responsiveness to the needs of women and the LGBTQ communities through education, outreach, and advocacy.

The road to establishing the Gender and Sexuality Center goes back decades. After separately establishing the Women’s Resource Center in 1997 and the GLBTA Agency in 2001, the two groups decided to pursue a joint center in the spring of 2002 in order to demonstrate greater student demand and establish an organization that would have greater long-term sustainability. The groups benefited from a new Dean of Students, Teresa Graham Brett, who was sensitive to women’s and GLBTQ issues and a new Student Government President, Brian Haley, who campaigned on a promise to establish a Gender and Sexuality Center. A proposal for a Gender and Sexuality Center was approved in March 2004 and its doors officially opened in August of that year. Since its establishment, the GSC continues to grow in attendance and visibility.

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University of Kansas

Original name: LGBT Resource Center
Current name: The Center for Sexuality and Gender Diversity
Institution size: 25k

Very much for the same reasons you have outlined in your proposal. In order to stay current, we noticed a shift toward SGD (sexuality and gender diversity) when discussing the LGBTQIA+ community. We also didn’t want to add letters to our previous LGBT Resource Center, however not doing so seemed archaic and exclusionary. Lastly, a majority of acronyms place far greater emphasis on sexuality/sexual orientation and leave out/minimize the diversity of gender identities the resonate with our students. It is our belief that in our current climate, where much of our work focuses on making structures/institutions safer, welcoming, less violent for Trans, GNC folx that we should be more up front about naming Gender Diversity.
Yes, the Women’s Center is a separate office. The Emily Taylor Center for Women recently changed their name to include “Women and Gender Equity” which has caused confusion. A majority of the problem comes from Student Senate at KU, who funds both my office and the Emily Taylor Center, so they don’t understand how the two offices are different. In response, we work very collaboratively on events, programs, initiatives, however I don’t believe that we have fully flushed out the ways in which we differentiate the two offices. This is a recent change, and has only caused confusion this past April with Student Senate, so we are going to be responding more about this in the upcoming semester. I would be very interested in how other campuses have responded to this confusion.

Vanessa E. Delgado, MA (pronouns: she/her/hers) | Assistant Director, Student Involvement & Leadership Center (SILC) | Center for Sexuality and Gender Diversity University of Kansas | Kansas Union | 1301 Jayhawk Boulevard, Room 400 | Lawrence, Kansas

Carleton College

My answers are brief, so I can respond quickly! Our center has always been called the Gender and Sexuality Center since its founding in 2001. I was not here at the time, so I don't know the history behind why that name was chosen. We do not have a women's center. Our campus has 2000 undergraduates.

There is no women's center at Carleton! I think we partly do the work that a women's center would do -- I often say to people that we are a combination of a traditional LGBT resource center, women's center, and survivor advocacy center. Our mission is actually broader than that of an LGBT resource center at this time, although it didn't start out that way.

Take care,

Laura

Bowdoin College - Maine

12ish years ago our center was new and named the Queer Trans Resource Center. 2000 students, undergrad only.

While that name was awesome in so many ways, when I got here 9 years ago it became clear to me that it wasn't a welcoming name to students who were in the early stages of figuring out who they are and/or did they want to connect with community. We changed to the Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity 8ish years ago. I never loved it, it all feels very vague, but we didn't want a name stuck with labels that wouldn't fit. At the same time, it also felt like the new name wasn't really saying anything. We went with it anyway.
Interestingly enough, it did cause some confusion and some unintended odd overlaps and gaps. The Women’s Resource Center shared a building with our Center and people confused them all the time. Students who came to the building for women's things often thought that's all the building was and vice versa. That said, we have decided to merge the two centers into one to think more holistically how we think about gender and sexuality. The new center will be the Sexuality, Women and Gender Center.

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**University of Toronto**

We are currently called: Sexual & Gender Diversity Office  
We were originally called: LGBTQ Resources & Programs  
Institution Size: enrollment is approximately 90,000 undergraduate and graduate combined.

This was before my time so I can’t give you a clear answer here. It was, in part, related to a reorganization of our office into a different division. Previously it has been located in Student Affairs and Student Services (now known as Student Life) and now we are in Human Resources & Equity.

There are three Women and Trans Centres at U of T – one on each campus. They are student run organizations. We simply explain that these are student-run organizations and that we are staff and part of the university administration.

Best,  
Kathy Vi Mac

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**Kathy Vi Mac**  
Program Coordinator, Sexual & Gender Diversity Office  
Human Resources & Equity

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**Summary of Responses from Consortium Listserv**

A request was sent to the Consortium listserv asking for responses from offices/centers that have changed their name to be more inclusive. Name changes were reported due to a need to be more inclusive of sexualities and genders. Some moved away from the LGBT alphabet acronym but some did decide to add more letters such as “I” or “Q” or “A” for Asexual. Some are planning to go through this process and have not made a decision yet while some have also started adding a plus sign at the end of the acronym in their communications.

Name Change Processes:

- Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Resource Center to Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer Intersex Asexual Resource Center, LGBTARC to LGBTQIARC  
- LGBT Student Services to the Center for LGBTQIA+ Student Success  
- Sexualities and Gender Diversity in a larger Diversity Office
• Moving away from the acronym and a task force is deciding.

Original Email Request:

“Colleagues and Friends,

Have you gone through a process of changing the name of your Office/Center to be more inclusive? Or decided not to use an acronym when naming your new Center? If so, would you be willing to share some thoughts, decisions, and any proposals you wrote? Happy to share my proposal with anyone willing to engage with me.

I have recommended a name change from “LGBTQA Resource Office” to “Gender & Sexuality Student Services” as many students in recent years have complained they are not represented in the acronym. This mirrors my friends at our sister campus at the University of Illinois Chicago. Note: Historically the A has been ally but I have lately been also saying Asexual. I have a number of Pansexual, Asexual, GenderQueer, Agender, Intersex and other identities represented among the students. Lately, the staff and I are using LGBTQIA+ in all of our communications in an attempt at inclusion even if we still do not in the Resource Office name.

Thank You!

Kerry”

Compilation of Responses:

Hello Kerry,

I am finding that it is more common for centers to be referred to as Gender and Sexuality Center or Pride Center, with the intent of being more inclusive of multiple, intersecting social identities :).

My narratives stem from working within or with LGBTQ+ spaces and seeing what Directors and/or Coordinators go through in order to navigate a name change.

Wayne Glass
Macalester College

Hey Kerry,

The year that I got to Penn State (two years ago) is when the Q was added to LGBTQA Student Resource Center (thus I was not a part of that process). Our A also officially stands for ally but we try to say LGBTQA students and their allies when we write stuff out anyway...
Other than that I haven’t really heard any other things about a potential name change here but have seen a movement towards what you’re suggesting.

Kari Jo Freudigmann  (Pronouns: she, her, hers)

Programming Coordinator LGBTQA Student Resource Center  The Pennsylvania State University  101 Boucke Building  University Park, PA 16802  (814) 863-1248

We went through this process in summer 2015. Our name was OUTreach: LGBT & Ally Resource Center. We were called the outreach center, but often got confused with the office of outreach on campus. We also saw many students identifying as ace, pan, demi, etc. I did not want to continue adding letters. We looked at other schools. Some went the route of gender and sexuality, some Pride Center, and a couple spectrum center.

We did not think that anything with the word sexuality would fly in our conservative campus/state. Spectrum seemed clinically linked to autism spectrum. We decided on Pride Center. It was inclusive and is historical, yet timeless. Rather than being descriptive of the many communities, it was symbolic of our feelings for ourselves and our community. The change went smoothly and marketing was much easier. It rolled off the tongue much easier and people immediately knew who we were.

Good luck! It’s no easy task.
Donna

Donna Braquet
She/Her/Hers
Professor, University Libraries
Hodges Library
1015 Volunteer Blvd.
Knoxville, TN 37996

Hi Kerry!

We’re going through the same process. I’d love to know what folx share!
Chad R. Mandala  |  he/him/his
Program Coordinator  |  GLBT Resource Center  |  Offices of the Dean of Student Life
Texas A&M University  |  1257 TAMU  |  College Station, TX 77843-1257

Hi Kerry,

I pursued a name change for our department based on student requests back in 2013.
We changed from Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Resource Center to Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer Intersex Asexual Resource Center.

I will include the letter I wrote to administration at that time.

I definitely knew going in that there would likely be need to add more terms later, but also knew that we had already received a lot of requests to include Queer, Intersex and Asexual, so figured that it was best to respond to those.

Regarding Gender and Sexuality type names... I have just found that there is still so much power is saying the terms "Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer Intersex Asexual" out loud - in meetings I always introduce myself using the full name of the center, and some people still have such visible reactions to the terms. There is still so much silencing and stigma, I felt like it was educational and meaningful to keep the terms in the name of the center.

Those are just some of the thoughts that I've had through the process of our name change, and I definitely can see why some centers decide to go with broader descriptive language!

Like y'all - we have been including the "+" symbol on the end of communications lately.

elizabeth coté
Pronouns: she/her/hers/they/them/theirs
Director
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual Resource Center
Student Community Center, Suite 1400
397 Hutchison Drive
Davis, CA 95616
530.752.3378
eacote@ucdavis.edu

UC Davis Letter:

VICE CHANCELLOR MEYER
Administrative and Resource Management

RE: Name Change Request – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Resource Center

Dear John,

The Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs formally requests approval to change the name of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Resource Center (LGBTRC). The proposed new name would be Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual Resource Center (LGBTQIARC).
The proposed name is reflective of the many communities served as well as evolving knowledge within the field of sexuality, gender and queer studies. The proposed name is also prompted by direct feedback from the students, staff and faculty served by the Center and is in line with the language used in the field to refer to people from historically underrepresented groups in terms of physical sex, gender identity and sexual orientation/identity. Some similar centers across the country have chosen to take on a name that serves as an umbrella (i.e. Pride Center, Equity Center). Following a model of an umbrella name was seriously discussed; however the educational value of the longer name is viewed as too valuable to lose. The proposed name provides the opportunity to educate around each of these historically underrepresented groups every time the Center’s name is introduced.

Initial inquiries regarding the design considerations and cost to change the name at the entrance to the center have been made and center leadership is prepared to move forward with the needed signage changes if the proposed name is approved.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,
Lora Jo Bossio
Associate Vice Chancellor, Student Affairs

I wanted to touch base about your message. While at Northwestern, we underwent a name change from “LGBT Resource Center” to “Gender and Sexuality Resource Center” while I was a graduate assistant. The case we made was based on your below argument of different gender identities expressions and sexual orientations not being represented in the office name. We also made a case based the social justice education outreach (via Safe Space trainings) being done with het and cis folks.

Looking back, we needed to do much better outreach, marketing, and communication about the office name changing and how the work wasn’t going to change in our case (i.e. there were some concerns from queer and trans students that the office wouldn’t be LGBTQ focused anymore).

Hope this helps, let me know if you need any further context and best of luck as you undergo your transition!

Brett Stachler, M.Ed.
Program Coordinator, Office of Multicultural Student Affairs
Center for Identity Inclusion
Campus and Student Life
The University of Chicago
Greetings Kerry,

We are in the midst of changing our office name from LGBT Student Services to the Center for LGBTQIA+ Student Success. Our staff navigated similar questions and concerns (as well as a few others). With the number of critical nuances in our name change journey, I would be happy to share more with you via phone if you may find that helpful. Please let me know!

Best,
Brad

Brad Freihoefer, Director
Pronouns: They, Them, Theirs

**IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY**
Center for LGBTQIA+ Student Success

Hi Kerry,

I did a lot of thinking about this 3 years ago when I started at Hamline. I think broader is better. I use Sexualities and Gender Diversity for that reason. I am imbedded in the larger Diversity Related office, that is in the middle of a name change and leadership change, so I don't have office or center.

My one thought or caution, is that I really try and stay away from using Student Services, because of the frame, resource center, or just office is better in my head. This was part of the larger conversation I was involved in just before coming to Hamline when I was in a Disability office.

t. aaron hans
 Acting Director, Diversity Initiatives Sexualities and Gender Diversity Deputy Title IX Coordinator Office of Multicultural and Diversity Initiatives Office: (651) 523-2380 tahans@hamline.edu www.hamline.edu

Hi Kerry,

Love this question.... We are debating this here as well... an additional element we face is that due to the conservative regional culture of the Southeast, it feels important to us to utilize the acronym as a strategy to increase familiarity and visibility... right now our center is just “LGBT” but I sometimes use “LGBTQIA” or “LGBTQ”

We had deliberated on “Gender and Sexuality Resources” but felt that it would cause confusion in regards to our Women’s Center services and mission. To add another layer, recently our
Interfaith, Women’s, and Intercultural centers merged to create the “Department of Diversity Initiatives,’ while our LGBT Center still stands alone.

Right now we just operate under the disclaimer that the acronym we utilize isn’t meant to be limiting, it’s meant to be more of an umbrella... not the best answer, but it’s what we’ve got!

I am curious to see what kinds of responses you get! Lookin forward to learning.

Take care,
Kaitlin

Kaitlin Legg, M.Ed.
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Hey Kerry –

We are about to engage in a very similar process here at Vanderbilt. I would absolutely love to know more about what you receive from others, if you are willing to share! We are most likely going to move towards no acronym in our name, as well, and we’ve considered creating a bit of a “task force” to get as much community-wide feedback as possible throughout the process. The name change will most likely occur at the same time as our 10-year anniversary on campus in the 2018-2019 academic year.

I appreciate your asking folx! Hope you have a wonderful day!

Liv

Liv Parks, M.S.
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Hi Kerry,

We are at a similar spot at Kent State University. Right now our Center name is: LGBTQ Student Center, and we receive the same feedback. If you are willing to share info that you collect, I would be very appreciative. I hope you get a good response back from the consortium folks.
Sincerely,
Ken

Ken Ditlevson, M.Ed., LPCC-S
Preferred pronouns: He/Him/His
LGBTQ Student Center Director
Division of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
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The official name of our office is the Office of LGBTQ Services (it was a struggle a few years ago to add the "Q"), but we call the physical resource center the Rainbow Resource Center. I know this may still be problematic for some who do not see themselves reflected in the rainbow flag, but it has worked rather well for our institution.

Crissi Dalfonzo
GA for LGBTQ Services
Division of Student Life
University of Maine
GLBTA Programs Office – Name Change Talking Points

Starting in the spring of 2015, the GLBTA Programs Office staff began the task of working to change our name. Language around identity and sexuality have changed enormously since our office has come to be known as the GLBTA Programs Office in 1993 (with the A added in 2006). While we continue to serve gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and allied people, we recognize the need to change our name to better reflect a broader community and to highlight currently unrecognized constituents in our communities: queer people and people with diverse and gender non-conforming gender identities. A rapidly growing number of students identify with *queer or trans*, and our name should reflect the language of the people we serve.

The year-long process has taken many hours of work, multiple individual and group conversations, and numerous surveys. The first phase of our work started with our staff researching other university centers across the country for best practices and current trends in names. Through that research, the staff came up with four proposed names that we sent to our main stakeholders on campus and in the community. From stakeholders’ responses, two names rose to the top: 1) The Gender and Sexuality Resource Center and 2) The Center for Queer and Trans Life. We then surveyed a larger number of constituents via our listservs. Based on more feedback and processing amongst staff, we then decided to combine the two names. This name was further vetted through our recent external review process in March 2016. We have now arrived at our new name - *The Gender and Sexuality Center for Queer and Trans Life*.

Although we are very excited for this new name, at the same time, we recognize this name still has some complexities and limitations as outlined below:

**The name will continue to be long and may sound cumbersome.** This is true for both our old and new name. We hope that folks will find language that will help us be easily identified and discussed (e.g. the “GSC” or the “Center” as shortened reference, similar to our office being referenced in the past as the “PO”). Likewise, we will encourage students and staff to share our full name in advertising, publicity, public speaking engagements, and whenever promoting our office.

**Our intention is to be more inclusive with language.** Nonetheless, we recognize that not all people accessing our programs and services will identify with the phrase *Queer and Trans*. Our staff took this feedback very seriously. We acknowledge gender and sexuality identities are complex and no one term, name, acronym, or list of letters will ever sum up the vast diversity of our communities and multiple dimensions of our identities. We will continue to promote space for individuals and communities to self-identify with words that best represent and validate one’s identity. Our hope is that the phrase *Gender and Sexuality Center* helps facilitate and invite this openness.

**Name changes take time.** Over the next 6 months, we will be working to update the campus and broader community about our name change. Our former name
has an important history which will undoubtedly remain meaningful to many students, faculty, staff, alumni and community members. We understand that people will continue to use our old name at times. This is okay. We just ask that the campus and broader community do their best in helping us transition to our new name.
With that said, we look forward to the opportunities the name brings for growth and community development:

**The name has flexibility.** Although seemingly long, the new name is both broad in scope and specific in naming marginalization.

**The name reflects the language that many people from various generations and communities are using.** This is especially true with incoming students and national trends across the country. See more details below.

**The name centers identities that have often been marginalized within some mainstream LGBTQIA+ movements.** In particular, highlighting trans lives is vital as statistics shows the risk for violence, harassment, health disparities, and other forms of discrimination are consistently highest amongst transgender and gender non-conforming individuals and communities, especially trans women of color.

**The name encourages dialogue and learning.** The name can serve as an important catalyst for dialogue. As educators, advocates, and supporters of LGBTQIA+ persons, we strive to promote the work of developing deeper understandings of gender and sexuality across campus.

**Rationale for “Queer and Trans Life”**

There are many reasons we are adding the words *queer* and *trans* into our name. These reasons fall into the following categories: 1) historical reclaiming, 2) student self-definition and word usage, 3) academic validity, 4) other colleges and universities with similar language in their name, 5) other general rationale.

**Historical Reclaiming:**

Although the word *queer* has at some points in history been used as a derogatory term, it has been reclaimed within many communities in the past 2-3 decades. *Queer*, as defined in most dictionaries, means "outside the norm". However, the contemporary definition found in mainstream platforms like Wikipedia define queer as the following: "Queer is an umbrella term for sexual and gender minorities that are not heterosexual or cisgender."

In our office’s education about language, we talk about how throughout history almost every word that has been used and claimed by us respectfully has also been used against us hatefully. For instance, many current and incoming students might have grown up hearing the phrase "that's so gay" and “no homo” as a derogatory insult, not the word queer. This may be different from previous generations of students who may have been more likely to hear the term queer as an insult. We want to honor and acknowledge the impact that hateful language has on all of us. By the same token, we want to highlight that leaving language and identities out of movements and organizations solely on the premise that dominant groups have used the language as an insult, only upholds the oppression our office is working to fight against. Finally, we want to emphasize that the reclaiming of language used negatively against communities varies amongst race, ethnicity, cultural background, and other related identities.

**Student Self-Identification and Usage:**

More and more students (as well as faculty and staff) are using the term queer to define themselves. Students often recognize and use queer as a more inclusive term that acts as an umbrella to define many variations of sexuality and/or gender identity and expression. We often hear students referring broadly to the LGBTQIA+ community as the
"queer community" as compared to the phrase "gay community" that was used more historically.

As our office continues to work to develop a more student-centered space, our connection with the student run Queer Student Cultural Center (named in 2000) becomes more and more vital. Having language in our name that reflects student organizations will distinguish our office as more relevant and available to students on campus. Furthermore, we recognize that it is important to have a new name that will be relatable to students for many years to come.

**Academic Validity:**

The terms *queer* and *trans* also have a place in academia. Queer theory has been used in academia since the 1990's to describe a body of critical theory that evolved from LGBT Studies and Feminist Studies. It is not uncommon for students in liberal arts and social science classrooms to hear the word *queer* used for scholarly purposes.

Through our Schochert Endowment, our office works closely with departments supporting Queer and Trans studies on campus and most recently created a fellowship entitled the Schochert Interdisciplinary Fellowship in Queer, Trans, and Sexuality Studies. The shift in our name will help us align more closely with academic units doing critical research and teaching around queer and trans issues.

**Other Colleges and Universities:**

Over 100 other colleges and universities across the country have decided to include queer in the name of the departments on campus serving marginalized sexualities and genders. (See a few listed below). Some colleges have shifted to add a "Q" to the list of letters in their name. Others have gone further to specifically name their office the "Queer Resource Center" or some variation of that name.

**Other Rationale.** We also believe that the addition of *queer* and *trans* to our name will do the following:

- Create space for discussion and learning, especially in regards to language and identity
- Makes us unique and a leader nationally, as no other office has this specific name that centers *queer* and *trans*.
- Work against the unintentional hierarchy of identities that comes with using acronyms and abbreviations for names (*L* first? *B* second? *T* last?).
- Distinguish us from the Women’s Center and the Department of Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies. We expect this will alleviate the confusion that might arise if we were to change our name to Gender and Sexuality Center.
- Center historically and currently marginalized identities both within and outside of the LGBTQIA+ communities and pushes against hetero- and homonormativity.
- Reflect the history of the work that the GLBTA Programs Office has been doing throughout the 20 years.
  - The GLBTA Programs Office was one of the first campus centers to add “T” to its name in the early 90’s.
Align with the history and legacy of leaders in LGBTQIA+ communities at the University of Minnesota and the broader Twin Cities with respect to mobilizing change around language, organizing, and advocacy.

- FREE (Fight Repression of Erotic Expression) was the first LGBTQIA+ student group in the country, founded in 1969.
- The U of M is well known for specific work and leadership around trans issues on campus via the Trans Commission, the Program in Human Sexuality, Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies, and student groups.

Reflect the urban and progressive setting that the U is situated in the Twin Cities (historically and currently) in regards to sexuality and gender. The state of Minnesota and the Twin Cities has been a progressive LGBTQIA+ environment for decades. This includes:

- MN being the first state with a civil rights law protecting trans identities (early 90’s)
- Progressive organizations like the former organization -- Trans Youth Support Network, and the current MN Trans Health Coalition, supporting trans communities in the Twin Cities and across the state
- Amazing nationally known trans activists like Andrea Jenkins and Cece McDonald residing and leading movements in the Twin Cities.

Finally, we plan to describe the addition of *Queer and Trans* to our name as not just identities but also as ideologies and umbrella terms. We will continue to advocate and promote that our work is for ALL folks — LGBTQIA+ and allies throughout campus and the community and promote space for individuals and communities to self-identify with any words that best represent and validate one’s identity.

**Potential Resources around the use of “Queer”:**

http://community.pflag.org/aboutqueer
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queer
http://www.outrightvt.org/aboutus/why-we-use-queer/
http://www.wesleyan.edu/queer/

**Examples of Colleges and Universities Using "Queer" in Their Name**

**Colleges and Universities with offices named “Queer Resource Center”**

- Harvard College
- San Francisco State University (Queer and Trans Resource Center)
- Amherst College
- Pomona College
- Portland State University
- Southern Oregon University

**Public Universities**

- California State University -- San Marcos -- LGBTQ Pride Center
- Ohio State University -- LGBTQ
- Penn State University -- LGBTQA Student Resource Center
- Purdue University– LGBTQ Center
- Rutgers University – LGBTQ and Diversity Resource Center
University of Arizona -- Office of LGBTQ Affairs
University of Cincinnati -- LGBTQ Center
University of Illinois -- Springfield -- LGBTQ Resource Office
University of Massachusetts -- Amherst
University of Missouri -- Columbia -- LGBTQ Resource Center
University of Nebraska -- Lincoln -- LGBTQ Resource Center
University of New Mexico -- LGBTQ Resource Center
University of North Carolina -- Chapel Hill -- LGBTQ Center
University of Wisconsin -- Stout -- LGBTQ Program Office

Private Universities

Augsburg College – LGBTQIA Student Services
Brown University -- LGBTQ Resource Center
Colgate University -- LGBTQ Initiatives
Depaul University -- Office of LGBTQA Student Services
Georgetown University -- LGBTQ Resource Center
Macalester College – LGBTQ@MAC
University of Chicago -- Office of LGBTQ Student Life
Vassar College -- Campus Life LGBTQ Center