

Report on Programs and Services for LGBTQ+ Students at Virginia Tech

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Division of Student Affairs at Virginia Tech engaged me to undertake an external review of the LGBTQ+ Resource Center and overall institutional commitment to LGBTQ+ work. This document serves as a report of this review, to be considered alongside internal evidence including previous campus climate studies, the Gallup student experiences and perceptions study, the campus climate study being conducted in 2018-2019, and other institutional data. In sum, I found that though students, faculty, and staff reported that progress had been made in climate, policy, programs, and facilities, there is substantial room to improve to provide a more equitable learning environment. Support for transgender students, in particular, lags.

On a positive note, students expressed gratitude for the expansion of the LGBTQ+ resource center, with new space more centrally located in Squires. They identified specific faculty and staff who had been supportive, sometimes to their surprise. Dr. Jordan Harrison of Cook Counseling was repeatedly mentioned as a key resource. Students appreciated and were aware – and members of the Caucus confirmed – that LGBTQ+ employees and allies paid a price in emotional labor and visibility on their behalf.

In the report that follows, I elaborate on four themes that cut across the review:

1. LGBTQ+ students described a campus climate of trepidation and worry, a feeling that in the absence of affirmative signs of their belonging they were constantly wary in each new interaction with peers, instructors, administrators, Corps leaders, and other campus actors.
2. There seems to be a small leading group of allies and champions, and a (hopefully small) lagging group of campus actors who will never be on board to promote LGBTQ+ equity and inclusion. The largest group on campus, however, are those in the middle – allies in waiting who could be invited in and activated as partners in changing the climate for LGBTQ+ people.
3. There is a lack of alignment across the LGBTQ+ Center's goals, activities, staffing, budget, and assessment. There is a planning process underway to articulate mission, vision, and values, but in the interim the lack of alignment – and precarious funding situation – work against the Center in making an impact on campus.
4. Transgender students have specific needs in policy, programs, practice, and facilities. Their educational, logistical (e.g., academic records), medical, psychological, and community belonging needs are not being met on campus or in greater Blacksburg.

This report summarizes findings and makes recommendations in four areas: campus LGBTQ+ climate, the LGBTQ+ Center, services and resources within the Division of Student Affairs, and services and resources outside the Division of Student Affairs. Ultimately, responsibility for the success of LGBTQ+ students belongs to everyone on campus.

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CONTEXT

A recent report by the Tyler Clementi Center at Rutgers University reviewed findings from four US research centers, finding nationally “a campus climate that is failing to provide an equitable learning environment for queer-spectrum and trans-spectrum students” (p. 3)¹. Results of concern include evidence of “troubling disparities across academic engagement and student health” (p. 3). The Clementi Center report is the latest and most comprehensive attempt to provide a national portrait of higher education from the perspective of LGBTQ+ students. In the ten years since noted LGBT campus climate expert Sue Rankin collected data for the *2010 State of Higher Education for LGBT People*² the climate for LGBTQ+ college students has not changed enough. And though the climate in K-12 schools has improved over time, evidence from the most recent GLSEN National School Climate Survey shows that progress on safe schools for LGBTQ+ youth has slowed for the first time in years³. As shown in the GLSEN report, nationwide efforts to turn back progress on civil rights for LGBTQ+ people threaten further to erode campus climate and safety.

Locally, Virginia Tech has been in a process of deepening its understanding of the student experience overall, with attention to LGBTQ+ students, first-generation college students, and students of color. A recent report from Gallup indicated that LGBTQ+ students experience the overall campus climate less positively than do their non-LGBTQ+ peers⁴. LGBTQ+ climate surveys of employees have shown persistent concerns about harassment, discrimination, and anti-LGBTQ+ attitudes on campus. Virginia Tech has rated a 3.5 (out of 5 possible points) on the *Campus Pride Index*⁵. A benchmarking activity of common factors used to measure LGBTQ campus climate on this index showed that compared to SCHEV peers⁶ Virginia Tech does not offer the same number of LGBTQ+-supportive policies, programs, or services that other large public universities do. Concern about the climate for LGBTQ+ students at Virginia Tech is therefore timely.

¹ The national studies included in these analyses are: Undergraduate Student Experience at the Research University (SERU), National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), four versions of the UCLA’s Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) surveys, and the National College Health Assessment (NCHA). Greathouse, M., BrckaLorenz, A., Hoban, M., Huesman, Jr., R., Rankin, S., & Stolzenberg, E. B. (2018). *Queer-spectrum and trans-spectrum student experiences in American higher education: The analyses of national survey findings*. New Brunswick, NJ: Tyler Clementi Center, Rutgers University. <https://tcc-j2made.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/2018/09/White-Paper-Final.pdf>

² Rankin, S., Weber, G., Blumenfeld, W., & Frazer, S. (2010). *2010 state of higher education for lesbian, gay, bisexual & transgender people*. Charlotte, NC: Campus Pride.

³ Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Zongrone, A. D., Clark, C. M., & Truong, N. L. (2018). *The 2017 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth in our nation’s schools*. New York, NY: GLSEN.

⁴ Gallup. (2018). *Virginia Tech Student Survey: Understanding students’ experiences and perceptions of Virginia Tech*. https://vtnews.vt.edu/content/dam/vtnews_vt_edu/documents/2018-student-survey-findings.pdf

⁵ See <https://www.campusprideindex.org/>

⁶ See <http://research.schev.edu/policytools/peergroups.asp>

FINDINGS: Overall

In a campus culture that is steeped in tradition and reliant on notions of the university as home⁷, LGBTQ+ students do not feel as strongly as their peers that “students at Virginia Tech look out for each other⁸.” During meetings for this external review, **LGBTQ+ students reported that they often feel invisible and unheard, and have been subject to acts of bias, hostility, and discrimination.** They described pressing needs for LGBTQ+-inclusive health and counseling services, trans-inclusive facilities and housing, and academic environments where they did not have to worry about whether or not instructors would be hostile or, at best, indifferent.

A repeated refrain entailed students describing the ways that they felt forced to do emotional and sometimes intellectual work to read the environment for cues that they were safe and that they could trust campus actors (such as faculty, administrators, healthcare providers) who were supposed to be there to support student learning, success, and wellbeing. This labor took a toll on their sense of belonging as well as on their academics, paid work, volunteering, and student engagement. Against a backdrop of exhortations to feel that “This is Home,” and not to ask too much or stand out from the rest of “Hokie Nation,” LGBTQ+ students do not feel an automatic trust in their surroundings as majoritized students might. They do not see themselves represented in university communications materials, their stories are not highlighted among campus heroes, their history and contributions to campus life are not understood or held up as valuable. So even in the absence of landmark incidents of homophobia or transphobia, they are wary. Their wariness finds expression in the energy they expend to investigate each new context – a new semester of classes, a residence hall move, a job supervisor, a provider in Schiffert or a counselor in Cook. And this investment of energy to avoid negative experiences based on others’ responses to core identities – sexual orientation and/or gender identity – comes at a cost that is recognized in research literature as *minority stress*⁹. One student simply said, “It’s just exhausting. That’s all. Exhausting.”

Also exhausting, according to students and members of the LGBT Caucus at Virginia Tech (hereafter “the Caucus”), are the ways that **students have had to do much of the work to make**

⁷ It is important to consider that for many LGBTQ+ students, “home” was not always an emotionally or physically safe space. Invoking the metaphor of college as home may not be a positive message for LGBTQ+ students and others whose experience of home was one of violence, mistrust, or fear. See, for example, Katz-Wise, S. L., Rosario, M., & Tsappis, M. (2016). LGBT youth and family acceptance. *Pediatric Clinics of North America*, 63(6), 1011-1025.

⁸ On the Gallup survey, 42% of VT students overall strongly agreed with this item, compared to 32% of LGBTQ+ Virginia Tech students.

⁹ Ilan Meyer introduced the concept of minority stress to the understanding of mental health in gay men, positing that chronic stress resulting from heterosexism contributed to reduced wellbeing. See Meyer, I. H. (1995). Minority stress and mental health in gay men. *Journal of health and social behavior*, 36(1), 38-56. For an updated overview of research using minority stress theory with LGB health outcomes, see Meyer, I. H., & Frost, D. M. (2013). Minority stress and the health of sexual minorities. In C. J. Patterson & A. R. D’Augelli (Eds.), *Handbook of psychology and sexual orientation* (pp. 252-266). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

changes that might more commonly be considered the responsibility of the institution.

Students reported drawn out processes of activism and self-advocacy to address policies and practices such as name changes in Banner, indicating pronouns, confronting homophobia in the Corps, or implementing a plan for gender inclusive facilities (bathrooms, locker rooms, residence halls). Certainly there is a place in campus life and student development for identity-based student activism and self-advocacy¹⁰, but there seems to be an unusually disproportionate amount falling on students who are already spending energy ascertaining their own safety at Virginia Tech.

While it is common in the development of programs, services, and resource centers for LGBTQ+ students and student organizations to be in the vanguard¹¹, it is also common for newer LGBTQ+ resource centers to undergo a period of organizational development as the campus adapts to the presence and role of this new entity in the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) landscape. The Virginia Tech LGBTQ+ Resource Center (hereafter “the Center”) opened in August 2016 with a full-time staff director. It transitioned from a student-run space overseen by HokiePRIDE to a professionally-staffed center within the Cultural and Community Centers (CCCs) unit of the Division of Student Affairs (DSA) and recently moved from smaller quarters in an out-of-the-way spot on the third floor of Squires to a larger, central location. Staff members reported that the relatively new CCC structure is in a dynamic state, and the LGBTQ+ Resource Center in particular is undertaking a process to arrive at a mission, vision, and values statement.

Overall, observations of programs, services, and support for LGBTQ+ students at Virginia Tech call to mind the “diffusion of innovation” curve promulgated by Everett Rogers¹². A bell-shaped curve represents the relatively small number of champions and innovators on campus who have been long-time allies and/or LGBTQ+ community members making positive changes in policy, programs, services, and climate (see Figure 1). At the opposite end of the curve are the fully resistant community members who are actively homophobic and transphobic, working against LGBTQ+ inclusion, equity, and visibility. But in between these poles lie the large majority of Hokies – students, faculty, staff, alums, and community members – who might be activated to improve the campus climate, join the champions in pro-actively working for positive change, and address the resistant minority in their midst. The result of this curved distribution is the continuation of a status quo that places an emotional burden on LGBTQ+

¹⁰ See Kezar, A., Acuña Avilez, A., Drivalas, Y., & Wheaton, M. M. (2017). Building social change oriented leadership capacity among student organizations: Developing students and campuses simultaneously. In D. Rosch (Ed.), *The role of student organizations in developing leadership. New Directions for Student Leadership (No. 155)*, pp. 45-57. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons. See also Renn, K. A. (2007). LGBT student leaders and queer activists: Identities of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer identified college student leaders and activists. *Journal of College Student Development*, 48(3), 311-330.

¹¹ For a history of LGBTQ+ student organizing and campus development of programs, services, and resource centers, see Marine, S. (2011). *Stonewall’s legacy: Bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender students in higher education. ASHE Higher Education Report*, 37(4). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

¹² Rogers, E. (2003). *Diffusion of innovations* (5th ed.). New York: Simon and Schuster.

students to discern their own safety and work with champions and active allies to improve the climate, programs, services, policies, and physical space for LGBTQ+ people at Virginia Tech. There are a number of opportunities and strategies available to activate the as yet untapped potential for transforming LGBTQ+ student experiences at Virginia Tech. The following sections on climate, the Center, and services offered by the DSA and others identify these opportunities and strategies, with recommendations for consideration and implementation.



Figure 1. Hypothesized distribution of campus actors in relation to promoting LGBTQ+ inclusion and equity on campus

FINDINGS: Campus LGBTQ+ Climate

As noted in the previous section, LGBTQ+ students do not experience Virginia Tech as a particularly welcoming campus. Importantly, however, they also did not describe it as a particularly hostile campus on the whole. Individual incidents of blatant discrimination, homophobia, and transphobia, together with anti-LGBTQ+ micro-aggressions contributed to an overall sense that personal vigilance is warranted and that it is safer to assume a lack of support than to assume support and safety. This external review included conversations with a few dozen students, some self-selected student leaders and others who participate in campus support groups. The sample is not representative. Yet the comments from students were consistent with the kinds of experiences reported in the two most recent faculty/staff LGBTQ+ surveys¹³ and with comments about student experiences from administrators and faculty during this review, providing an element of triangulation of the observations. The Gallup survey further corroborates the conclusion that the climate for LGBTQ+ students at Virginia Tech is one that seems unlikely to promote wellbeing.

¹³ Mecham, R. (2018). *Virginia Tech LGBTQ+ Climate Survey*. Division of Human Resources, Organizational Development, Virginia Tech. See also Schnitzer, M., & Fang, F. (2015). *LGBTQ Climate Survey Report*. LGBT Faculty and Staff Caucus, Virginia Tech.

Per several conversations there is an all-campus student climate study, designed to address multiple and intersecting¹⁴ student identities, being distributed in winter 2019. Presumably this study will provide depth to understanding the Gallup survey results that showed differences in a handful of categories of student experiences, perceptions, and climates across race, sex, LGBTQ+ identities, income, and college generation. It was not the purpose of the present review to provide advice on the upcoming climate survey but some key principles of campus climate studies apply to the upcoming Virginia Tech effort:

1. Sample to obtain both representative *and* focused samples.
2. Disaggregate data for granular insights into campus climate and analyze in combinations that provide insight into intersecting identities (e.g., African American/Black LGB students; white transgender students in the Corps of Cadets; international LGBTQ+ graduate students).

Best practice in climate studies suggests seeking a sample that is representative and that oversamples minoritized people to ensure that the final data set describes their experiences¹⁵. For the upcoming climate study, collection and analysis of disaggregated data will provide a wider context in which to understand the results of the Gallup survey and the present external review.

During this review visit, students reported incidents of homophobia, transphobia, heterosexism, genderism, and anti-LGBTQ+ microaggressions. Some students reported that through environmental scanning and “just luck” they were able to put themselves in course sections, organizations, or living situations with instructors and staff whom they knew, believed, or discovered would be supportive when negative incidents happened in those contexts. First year undergraduates had located an LLC leader and a (student) regimental commander who were of particular support in their transition as LGBTQ+ students new to Virginia Tech. Dr. Jordan Harrison of the Cook Counseling Center was repeatedly cited as a key resource. Graduate students, whose academic programs and employee status are typically intertwined through departmental assistantships, experienced more isolation than undergraduates, noting a lack of opportunities to connect with other graduate students outside

¹⁴ I use *intersecting* instead of *intersectional* because intersectional is a term more appropriately applied to systems of privilege and oppression than to identities. This distinction is a matter of debate among scholars of college student identities, with most aligning with the definition of intersecting as describing, for example, the ways that race, gender, and sexuality mutually create identities for Latinx gay men or Asian American genderqueer students. See Wijeyesinghe, C. (Ed.). (2017). Enacting intersectionality in student affairs. *New Directions for Student Services* (No. 157). San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.

¹⁵ Worthington, R. L. (2008). Measurement and assessment in campus climate research: A scientific imperative. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 1(4), 201-203. See also Hurtado, S., Griffin, K. A., Arellano, L., & Cuellar, M. (2008). Assessing the value of climate assessments: Progress and future directions. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 1(4), 204.

of mixed undergrad-grad groups¹⁶. In reflecting on students with whom they worked, Caucus members confirmed students' reports about points of hostility and support on campus.

When asked to consider what led to the feeling noted earlier of having to be constantly vigilant, even in the absence of overt anti-LGBTQ+ incidents, students responded in a few ways. For some, stories about past incidents pervaded their conception of current climate and wariness was a self-preserving response. For others, the lack of visibility of LGBTQ+ culture and people on campus contributed to feeling like there must be a reason *not* to be more visible themselves. For example, anti-LGBQ and recently anti-Trans articles in the *Collegiate Times* – a university-sanctioned paper – signaled an institutional lack of concern for the safety of LGBTQ+ students. To whatever extent military tradition and the ongoing presence of the Corps influence contemporary campus culture, and to whatever extent there is an unseen ethos after the 4/16 tragedy not to question the presumably shared feeling that “This is Home,” some students could not articulate a specific reason why they felt unwelcome and wary, but were unsure how they could break the silence around being LGBTQ+ to enter a conversation about transforming campus culture at Virginia Tech to redefine “home” into a more inclusive place. The same climate that led a higher percentage of Virginia Tech students (overall) than their peers at comparable universities to strongly agree in the Gallup survey that “students here look out for one another” also led some LGBTQ+ students away from feeling like they could interrupt that strong feeling of Hokie affinity. It is possible that a campus climate survey will not get at the heart of some of these nuances, though it may indicate some directions for follow up in other climate study formats.

Specific to LGBTQ+ students of color, of whom I met a handful, the climate seemed to be one of “separate spheres.” The QTPOC group provided a space where their intersecting racial, sexual orientation, and gender identities were supported. Some described feeling comfortable in predominantly white LGBTQ+ spaces, but none said that they felt safe being out as LGBTQ+ in spaces for students of color. In those spaces, they said, they were more likely to put their sexual and gender identities “on the back burner” to focus on fellowship and/or activism with students from their racial/ethnic group or in cross-group coalitions.

Recommendations for Campus LGBTQ+ Climate

1.1 Develop a plan to identify and activate student, faculty, and staff allies. Plan should include strategies, timelines, and intended outcomes, as well as resources and staff necessary

¹⁶ Although there has been an active Queer Grads, Professionals, and Allies Group (see website linked from the Center's page, most recently updated in 2014: <http://qgpavt.wixsite.com/qgpavt>) a graduate student at one meeting reported that QGPAG is currently inactive. It is not unusual for student-led undergraduate and graduate LGBTQ+ groups to cycle through periods of activity and hiatus, though if an institution is relying on student organizations to provide critical support services, this model risks breaks in services (see Renn, K. A. (2007). *LGBT Student Leaders and Queer Activists: Identities of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer-identified college student leaders and activists. Journal of College Student Development, 48* (3), 311-330.).

to implement the plan. The Center director might collaborate with the Senior Director of the CCCs to consider how to set priorities in the plan and involve key stakeholders (e.g., other CCC directors, faculty and staff outside the Caucus, faculty development, Office of Diversity and Inclusion).

1.2 Follow through with stated plan to re-institute a Safe Zone program at some level. The former Safe Zone program was described as being on hiatus (the CCCs website says it is “on hold this semester,” with “selected sessions” to be offered in spring¹⁷). Safe Zone programs are common and range from simple one-time workshops to more complex educational and advocacy programs designed to result in competencies that include understanding LGBTQ+ issues, advocating for change, and considering intersecting identities¹⁸. While a more complex program may be the ultimate ideal at Virginia Tech, the lack of a simple way for allies to identify themselves to students contributes to the feeling that students must spend energy ever scanning their environment. Displaying a Safe Zone certificate or placard (a color photocopy is the norm on many campuses) does not indicate that the individual is fully aware and will not make mistakes, but it indicates an openness to talking with LGBTQ+ students and having access to resources to whom to refer LGBTQ+ people for more support, advocacy, or advice. Participating in an introductory-level Safe Zone program could be a first step to activate members of the middle group on the champions/allies curve. There is value in a short-term, broad-based increase in visibility while background work is developed to support a more sophisticated program that may require more resources and staff time. There may be merit in a phased model – doing something immediate to improve visibility and reduce burden on students for scanning the environment, then adding on and deepening into a credential after re-establishment of the baseline program for awareness and ally visibility.

1.2.a Implement some form of Safe Zone program in Spring 2019 to address the pressing need for students to have some way to see self-identified allies on campus. The Center director could deploy existing program infrastructure while other decisions are made about a more complex Safe Zone curriculum for Virginia Tech.

1.2.b Consider the best place to locate the Safe Zone program at Virginia Tech. The program could be located within the Center, the larger CCC structure, the DSA, or the Office of Inclusion and Diversity (OID). Most typically, Safe Zone programs operate out of an LGBTQ+ campus resource center. For the overall provision of programs, services,

¹⁷ https://ccc.vt.edu/awareness/safe_zone.html

¹⁸ A recent book on Safe Zone programs is an excellent resource: Poynter, K. J. (Ed.). (2016). *Safe Zones: Training allies of LGBTQIA+ young adults*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. For a description of different models of Safe Zone programs, see Poynter, K. J., & Tubbs, N. J. (2008). Safe zones: Creating LGBT safe space ally programs. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 5(1), 121-132. See also Woodford, M. R., Kolb, C. L., Durocher-Radeka, G., & Javier, G. (2014). Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender ally training programs on campus: Current variations and future directions. *Journal of College Student Development*, 55(3), 317-322.

education, and advocacy for LGBTQ+ students to occur, it will be necessary to locate a Safe Zone program where it can be prioritized and adequately supported.

1.2.c Consider different models of implementing Safe Zone training, including a “train the trainer” model, that would provide capacity-building for allies around campus who are ready to take a leadership role in training colleagues.

1.2.d Develop accessible resource lists so that Safe Zone participants with minimal knowledge of referral options will have a baseline ability to support LGBTQ+ students.

1.2.e Partner with other CCCs in the development of the Safe Zone program to ensure that the experiences and needs of LGBTQ+ students of color are addressed. Consider also working with other campus partners in relation to where students’ identities may intersect: student disability services, the Corps of Cadets, faith-based services, athletics, and so on.

1.3 Consider implementing a speakers’ bureau program. LGBTQ+ speakers bureaus¹⁹ are common in higher education and community resource centers as a means to accommodate requests for panels and speakers on a range of LGBTQ+ topics from “LGBTQ+ 101” panels (e.g., for a staff orientation or introductory social science course) to more specialized talks on LGBTQ+ experiences (e.g., trans healthcare, being queer in STEM). Having a trained group of volunteer students, staff, faculty, and (often) alums reduces responsibility for LGBTQ+ resource center staff and LGBTQ+ student organization leaders to be the only “spokespeople” for the community. Cis-straight allies are sometimes included in speakers bureaus, though the requests for their participation on a panel may be less frequent. The upfront investment of time in training speakers pays dividends later by reducing demand on designated center and group staff/leaders, presenting a more diverse perspective on LGBTQ+ campus life than can be done by a small number of people, and building capacity of students, faculty, staff, alums – both LGBTQ+ and allies – to represent the community and provide valuable education and advocacy. The Caucus, Center, student organizations, and Ex Lapide (LGBTQ+ alums of Virginia Tech) would be logical sources for volunteer speakers. Cross-center partnerships with the other CCCs could be very productive in integrating intersecting identity perspectives into speakers bureau offerings.

1.4 Conduct a campus audit and process map the experiences of LGBQ and Trans/Gender non-Binary (GNB) students, including students with intersecting minoritized identities, to identify policies, practices, and procedures that result in an unfriendly campus climate, micro-aggressions, invalidation, and hostility toward LGBTQ+ students. The audit and mapping

¹⁹ The Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals offers several program examples and guidelines for speakers bureaus at http://architect.lgbtcampus.org/peer_education_and_speakers_bureau. Also see speakers bureau examples from Iowa State (<https://center.dso.iastate.edu/programs/panels>), SUNY Albany (<https://www.albany.edu/lgbt/38104.php>), and Ohio State (<https://mcc.osu.edu/education-and-training/lgbtq-education-dialogues-programs/>).

process²⁰ involves gathering appropriate staff (e.g., admissions, orientation, academic advising, residence life, health providers, LGBTQ+ Center, Corps, career services, study abroad, registrar, bursar, student activities, leadership development) and walking through the student experience from first contact with Virginia Tech through application, matriculation, orientation, major selection, to graduation and life as a Virginia Tech graduate²¹, all with an eye to the policies, practices, procedures, forms, and daily experiences of LGBQ and trans/GNB students. The purpose is to identify the typically unseen (to faculty and staff) moments in students' lives when being LGBQ or trans matters or might matter, and to remove barriers to full inclusion and equity. Particular care should be taken to consider the experiences of students whose sexual orientation and/or gender identities change during their time at Virginia Tech, and the institutional processes involved in smoothing that transition through eliminating barriers in policy, practice, and procedure. An ideal audit process might involve students with staff, perhaps in sequence (faculty/staff take the first round, then use the outcome of that activity to work with students to verify, correct, and identify additional barriers). To be clear, students should not be expected to develop and implement institutional solutions but can be critical in identifying sticking points where current policies and practices do not meet their needs.

1.4.a Consider a two-tier leadership structure for the audit process: Invitations to the process should come from someone with authority to request participation from administrators and faculty across campus who have responsibility for policy-setting and implementation (possibly a two-person invitation from the Vice President of Student Affairs and the Vice Provost for Inclusion and Diversity/Vice President for Strategic Affairs); the process itself should be led by a senior person (possibly Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs Dr. Angela Simmons or one of the Assistant or Associate Vice Provosts in OID) who becomes the "keeper" of the results, responsible for following up and reporting back on progress. The Senior Director of the CCCs might instead be the appropriate person to lead the audit and take responsibility for results and follow up. The Center director is likely to be a key informant and may end up named as the responsible party for some implementation items, but given the scope of policy authority on campus, they are unlikely to be in a position to make many of the changes identified in the audit.

²⁰ Michigan State University and other institutions in the University Innovation Alliance have used process mapping activities to examine student success for minoritized and low-income students. See <https://www.chronicle.com/article/To-Improve-Student-Success-a/238121> or <https://er.educause.edu/articles/2018/3/using-process-mapping-to-redesign-the-student-experience>

²¹ Audit and mapping could be broken down into chronological chunks (e.g., pre-admission through first semester, second through final semester, graduation into VT alum status) to make the process more manageable, but the opportunities for considering how students might transition sexual orientation and/or gender identities at any point in the process might be missed. An observed benefit of process mapping activities at other universities has been the cross-campus capacity building by staff participants who must consider how students might, for example, experience the administrative siloes of academic advising, health services, registrar, and residence life.

1.4.b Consider intersecting identities and experiences. How would these processes be experienced differently by LGBTQ+ students of color, international students, first-gen and low-income students, graduate students, or students in the Corps?

1.4.c Follow up right away to fix “low hanging fruit” – those low-cost, quick-to-implement changes that could make an immediate difference in the lives of students. Examples might include correcting information on websites and eliminating binary gender/sex identity options and instances of the phrase “he or she” in text and on forms. The people with authority to make these quick, low-cost changes may be participants in the audit process, and they can return to their units to implement changes immediately.

1.4.d Develop a plan, with timeline, responsible party, and resource identification, for prioritizing and addressing more complex solutions.

1.4.e Follow up on the plans and report back to parties involved (administrators, faculty, students). The “keeper” who runs the audit would be in a reasonably position to do this follow up and reporting.

1.5 Develop a plan and philosophy for communication from top leadership (e.g., president and vice presidents) about LGBTQ+ issues. LGBTQ+ community members did not see support coming from the president on, for example, trans issues, in spite of recent vice-presidential statements. As Virginia Tech leaders know all too well, the nature, mode, and speed of communication from university leaders when there is an on- or off-campus threat to physical or psychological safety (e.g., recent hate-motivated mass murders, proposed or enacted anti-LGBTQ+ legislation) has become a very complicated matter in US higher education. Responses to hate- and bias-related incidents on and off campus – whether or not campus individuals have been physically harmed – are watched carefully and critically by students for signs that their university is paying attention to the climate. Social media and a 24-hour news cycle further complicate the situation, as leaders may be criticized for not responding quickly enough with just the right sentiment. In this context it may be impossible to make every minoritized group feel included at all times, but the symbolism of who communicates when and through what channels conveys messages of inclusion or exclusion. Conversations about expectations for the circumstances under which various forms of communication come “from the top” could alleviate some concerns that the LGBTQ+ community does not see this support and, for lack of more convincing evidence, wonders whether or not they have the full backing of the university leadership.

1.6 Implement the planned campus-wide student climate study to understand more deeply the experiences underlying the Gallup study findings, **consider adding a visual data collection element**, and **act on the results of the climate study**. As noted above, a campus-wide climate study is planned for data collection in winter 2019. The design of a campus-wide climate study can be a daunting undertaking; there are a number of good examples of thorough studies

available online²². There have been recent developments in methods for campus climate studies that might illuminate even more fully the campus climate. For example, while climate studies have for years combined surveys (quantitative data) with focus groups (qualitative data), Michigan State University added a visual method to its most recent campus climate study, using heat maps to identify places on campus where students felt most welcome/supported and least welcome/supported²³. The addition of visual data – which could be done within the planned survey or as a separate data collection activity – can help to pinpoint locations, programs, and services on campus that are already doing a good job in making LGBTQ+ students feel welcome and those that are experienced as especially hostile.

1.6.a Develop a plan for distributing climate study results on campus. Regardless of data collection formats used, it is vital to make results of a climate study accessible to the community.

1.6.b Develop a plan and prioritize activities for addressing campus climate where it is found to be hostile/unwelcoming and to learn from and amplify the locations of positive climate.

1.6.c Develop specific plans for addressing climate issues for students with intersecting minoritized identities, such as LGBTQ+ students of color. There is a growing literature and an increasing number of examples nationally of strong programs from which to draw models²⁴

1.7 Develop and implement a plan for faculty and staff development related to LGBTQ+ inclusion, diversity, and equity. In addition to considering a Safe Zone program and speakers bureau, implementing a plan for faculty and staff development could address the ongoing climate students face in not knowing whether or not they are safe, in advocating for their own

²² The UC system conducted climate studies at all of its campuses and put the resulting reports online, including the instrument. See <http://campusclimate.ucop.edu/results/index.html>. Iowa State University also conducted a campus-wide climate study (<https://www.campusclimate.iastate.edu/survey>). UC and ISU contracted with Rankin & Associates, though Dr. Rankin has given case-by-case permission for campuses to use their climate instrument free of charge (contact Dr. Rankin through <https://rankin-consulting.com/>). The University of Wisconsin Madison conducted its own study, with results and technical report available online (<https://apir.wisc.edu/diversity/climate-study-surveys/>).

²³ See <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Heat-Maps-Give-Michigan/238112>

²⁴ See this resource from the Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals on policy and practice recommendations for supporting trans and queer students of color <https://lgbtcampus.memberclicks.net/assets/tqsoc%20support%202016.pdf>. For research, see Miller, R. A., Wynn, R. D., & Webb, K. W. (2018). “This really interesting juggling act”: How university students manage disability/queer identity disclosure and visibility. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*. See also Duran, A. (2018). Queer and of color: A systematic literature review on queer students of color in higher education scholarship. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*. See also Garvey, J. C., Mobley Jr, S. D., Summerville, K. S., & Moore, G. T. (2018). Queer and trans* students of color: Navigating identity disclosure and college contexts. *The Journal of Higher Education*. Advance online publication at doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2018.1449081>. See also Duran, A. (2018). A photovoice phenomenological study exploring campus belonging for queer students of color. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 1-15.

needs when the institution should be taking more responsibility, and in reducing policy, programmatic, curricular, and practice-based barriers to full inclusion and equity. The necessarily voluntary nature of Safe Zone programs means that not everyone will take up this educational opportunity; integrating LGBTQ+ topics throughout the campus-wide new faculty and staff orientations, ongoing training, supervision, and performance review processes provides multiple venues for reaching that “potential to activate” majority and reinforcing to “active resisters” the institutional expectations for creative an inclusive educational environment.

FINDINGS: LGBTQ+ Resource Center

The LGBTQ+ Resource Center is both a physical space in Squires and an organizational unit within the Division of Student Affairs. As a physical space, the Center is in a new location, with increased visibility compared to the previous space, inviting décor, and resources (e.g., books, materials) that support student identities, engagement, and sense of belonging. Students expressed gratitude for the new space and seemed to understand both the actual benefit (appealing space for meetings, safe space for touching down when in the building, affirming space for identity exploration) and the signal that “the Administration” supported them as LGBTQ+ people. On a campus steeped in military culture, it is not lost on LGBTQ+ students that they supplanted student veterans²⁵ for this space. They expressed appreciation for the new space and look forward to being with other CCCs in the new campus center that was described to me.

As an organization, the Center is partway through its third year in its current administrative structure. It is largely in a “start-up” phase of establishing itself, its practices, and aspirations. As noted in the Overview it is fairly common nationally for an LGBTQ+ resource center to undergo a transition from student-run space to a larger space, run by a Center director, plus additional Center programming and activities. The transition can be seen as a natural progression from student leadership, advocacy, and activism into a more institutionalized responsibility for providing programs and services for LGBTQ+ students within a framework of cultural centers operating in the Division of Student Affairs. Often, this start-up time in an LGBTQ+ resource center’s history is one of ambiguity of responsibility, purpose, and goals. If students used to be fully responsible for Pride Month, who does that now? If volunteers staffed the physical resource center space but now there are paid student staff at the Center, is there still a role for volunteers? Do student leaders feel like the professionalization of this work steps

²⁵ LGBTQ+ identity and student veteran status are not mutually exclusive. Indeed I met several students, staff, and alum who identified as LGBTQ+ Corps members and/or military veterans. The need for students to prioritize identities across multiple identity-based spaces is not unique to Virginia Tech and is the subject of a growing body of literature on intersecting identities in higher education. See footnote 23.

on their toes? Who is accountable to whom – student organization leaders to director, director to student leaders – and how do they communicate expectations and hold one another to their commitments? To be clear, this “start-up” experience, or transition from student-led programs/services to professionally-led ones, is not unique to Virginia Tech, and the Center director can likely learn from colleagues who have gone through similar organizational development phases at LGBTQ+ and other identity-based cultural centers at other large public research universities. The Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Center Professionals is an excellent source of professional development in this regard.

At present, a striking feature of the Center is the overall lack of alignment across students’ expressed needs and the activities, staffing, and budget of the Center. The lack of alignment derives in part from the lack of stated mission, vision, values, and strategic plan – and it is important to note that the LGBTQ+ Center is at the forefront among the CCCs in the re-organized structure in terms of drafting these guiding documents.

A new organization requires a strong match between start-up activities and the skills, priorities, and capacity of its leadership. In the case of the Center, that leadership is the Director and the Senior Director of the CCCs. A good example of this match is the Director’s current initiative to gather community input into the mission, vision, and values of the Center²⁶. A theme observed in this review is that the hopes various stakeholders – including LGBTQ+ students, the Caucus, the Center director, the DSA, and the OID – have for the Center are not fully aligned with one another. Ideally, the current mission-drafting process will help bring them into closer alignment, though there ought always to be room for stakeholders to bring different ideas to the table. It is a lot to ask a new director who is also a relatively new professional to lead this process and manage stakeholder expectations, though having the support of CCC colleagues and the Senior Director should facilitate this process. Given what students said about feeling a lack of support from the institution as a whole, and given the organizational location of the Center (within the CCCs in the DSA), it is vital that direct service to students, as well as programming and advocacy to improve campus climate for students, be central to the mission, values, and vision. There may be aspirations for a larger staff (e.g., an assistant director or program coordinator; graduate assistants; more students on hourly pay) and larger budget, but it is critical to prioritize immediate needs while developing a strategy to achieve those aspirations.

The Senior Director overseeing the CCCs reported that the funding for the LGBTQ+ Resource Center is provided in part by the Division of Student Affairs, in part by the Office of Inclusion and Diversity (OID, located in the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost), in part by the Hokie Family Annual Fund, and in part through DSA auxiliary income. Compared to LGBTQ+ resource centers at other public universities the size of Virginia Tech, the roughly \$20,000

²⁶ I did not receive a copy of the draft of this document, though several people commented on the draft circulating at the time of my early November 2018 visit.

budget²⁷, some already earmarked for programs like history and heritage month or supplementing funding for the HokiePRIDE student organization, is modest. The 2018 national average (including institutions of all sizes) was \$65,500²⁸. Presumably as the CCCs are fully staffed and operations become more regular, the precarious nature of funding for the LGBTQ+ Center will stabilize.

Finally, in the context of the transition from student-led space to the formalized Center, a transition in reporting line and the hiring of a new Senior Director in 2017, and the varied sources of its financial support, there seemed to be some lack of clarity in perceptions about accountability and autonomy of the Center. Presumably as the CCC structure evolves this lack of clarity will resolve.

Recommendations for the LGBTQ+ Resource Center

2.1 Finalize the office's vision, mission, values statement. Continue the process of involving stakeholders to arrive at a workable statement that has wide buy-in on campus.

2.1.a Include a priority on directly serving LGBTQ+ students.²⁹

2.1.b Include a priority on collaborating with other CCCs to create affirming spaces for LGBTQ+ students of color in the Center and in programs/services designed for students of color.

2.2 Create a strategic plan to actualize the vision, mission, and values. Within the plan, identify priorities and timelines, as well as resources necessary.

2.2.a Identify specific ways that the Center can collaborate with other CCCs to address needs of LGBTQ+ students of color and increase multicultural competence of white LGBTQ+ students.

²⁷ Does not include salary for Center director, which is paid through the Division of Student Affairs, or funding for two hourly student workers, paid through DSA auxiliary. Some of these funds, such as from the Hokie Family Annual Fund for history/heritage month, must be applied for by DSA and are not guaranteed. The \$20,000 estimate was derived from the known \$10,000 from OID, plus (recently) \$9000 from Hokie Family Annual Fund, and some unknown amount of supplement from auxiliaries for HokiePRIDE supplement (administered by the Center).

²⁸ The Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals conducts periodic reports of staffing, responsibilities, and organizational features of members. The *2018 Self Study Report* included budget information for 90 campuses, averaging \$65,486 with a median of \$20,000. Campuses ranged from fewer than 5000 students (20% of 101 respondents) to 30,000 or more students (30% of respondents). See <https://lgbtcampus.memberclicks.net/assets/docs/Self%20Study%20Report%202018.pdf>

²⁹ Some stakeholders noted that they felt the draft they had seen did not adequately place student service as a priority. Best practices in cultural center leadership suggest that students should be a priority in mission and programs (see Patton, L. D. (2010). *Culture centers in higher education: Perspectives on identity, theory, and practice*. Stirling, VA: Stylus Publishing).

2.2.b Identify intended outcomes and success metrics (e.g., students served, Safe Zone trainers trained, collaborative programs initiated and implemented) for 1, 3, and 5 years

2.2.c Align priorities and activities of the Director with achieving the intended outcomes and metrics

2.3 Develop a sustainable, reliable budget model for the Center. With the majority of the expendable portion of the current budget coming in annual allocations from outside the DSA (Hokie Family Foundation, DIE), the Center is at a disadvantage in planning and exists in a state of insecurity. Certainly it is true that any/all university budgets in 2018 are under some real or perceived pressure, but when a unit director must rely on funds from outside their division, the precarity becomes even more serious. The CCCs are newly formed (or re-conceived). It makes sense that their budgets have been cobbled together until now. But as they mature past start-up mode, knowing that they are on at least even pace with their peers across the DSA in terms of reliability of a budget would facilitate forward planning and alignment of vision, strategic plan, and metrics.

2.3.a Align intended outcomes and success metrics with budget

2.3.b If budget is not currently adequate to achieve outcomes and meet metrics, identify strategies within the CCC and DSA structure to address opportunities. Although it is tempting to make fundraising an immediate priority of the Center, this responsibility is more typically handled by professionals in the field who have expertise and access to necessary institutional information³⁰.

2.4 Develop a sustainable staffing model for the Center. The Center in its current form is only two years old and has had only one director, currently assisted by two student staff paid hourly. The 2018 national self-study of the Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Center Professionals indicated that a more typical staffing pattern at an institution the size of Virginia Tech might include a director and a half-time (20 hours per week) graduate student or an assistant director/program coordinator (full-time). National practice suggests that the staffing at Virginia Tech may be a bit slim, though it is more important to align the staffing to the strategic plan, success metrics, and budget than it is to develop new staff positions for the sake of keeping up with other large public research universities. A 3- or 5-year plan might include

³⁰ A number of LGBTQ+ campus resource centers (e.g., Indiana University, Michigan State, UCLA, University of Michigan) have been the beneficiaries of generous donations from alums who have capacity for substantial gifts and who are eager to see their gift transform LGBTQ+ life on campus. Furthermore, Noah Drezner has studied philanthropy among LGBT alums and determined that there is an opportunity here for increased attention from institutional development officers. See Drezner, N. D., & Garvey, J. C. (2013). Alumni giving in LGBTQ communities: Queering philanthropy. In N. D. Drezner (Ed.), *Expanding the donor base in higher education* (pp. 84-96). New York: Routledge. Also see Drezner, N. D., & Garvey, J. C. (2016). LGBTQ alumni philanthropy: Exploring (un)conscious motivations for giving related to identity and experiences. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 45(1_suppl), 52S-71S.

opportunities to change staffing model to align expectations with existing and potential future resources

2.4.a Clarify the distribution of work across student staff, who are currently also serving as student leaders (HokiePRIDE), to differentiate responsibility for running the physical center space from the programmatic offerings of the Center. The transition from student-led space to a director in 2016 provides an opportunity to clarify what activities align with student organization leadership, physical center operations, and professionally-led Center activities.

2.4.b Consider the value proposition of hiring one graduate assistant instead of two undergraduates who have student organization responsibilities.

2.4.c Consider the opportunity to develop internships for undergraduates and graduate students in Center operations. The current director does not have the academic credentials to supervise MSW or counseling graduate students, but could provide meaningful undergraduate internships in areas of need (e.g., graphic design, social media, communications, event planning) and graduate internships for students in higher education/student affairs and other programs. Running a Safe Zone program (in a phased in model as noted in recommendation 1.2), organizing a speakers bureau, or managing events in Pride Month are among the activities that graduate interns undertake at other universities with student affairs graduate preparation programs.

2.5 Consider developing an advisory board for the Center, comprised of “champions” who can provide advice on maximizing the work of the Center in the context of the mission, vision, values, and strategic plan. The advisory board could be drawn from existing Caucus and Ex Lapse members, and/or it could be used to bring in new allies who are in particularly important institutional locations (e.g., health services, psychological services, registrar, infrastructure/physical plant planning).

2.5.a Use the advisory board as a two-way communication opportunity to gather input and to share the work of the Center to stakeholders and to key gatekeepers to campus resources.

FINDINGS: Services and Resources within Division of Student Affairs

Four additional areas within Student Affairs were of particular interest to LGBTQ+ students and this review: Health and wellness services, residence life, and communications/ advancement/development, and the CCCs as a whole.

Health and wellness services (Schiffert Health Center, Cook Counseling, Wellness, Recreational Sports) for LGBTQ+ students came up often in discussions with students and were included as part of this review. Representatives from Cook Counseling, Schiffert Health Center, Hokie Wellness, Recreational Sports, and the AVPSA overseeing health and wellness attended a group

meeting and described what they saw as their current strengths and challenges in serving LGBTQ and Trans* students. Availability and quality of services for trans/GNB students were named by students and by providers as a particular area for increased attention, training, and development. Health and wellness leadership seemed to be aware of these challenges and making efforts to improve the experiences of LGBTQ+ students. For example, the plans for the recreational sports facility include an innovative approach to providing single-user restrooms that will serve the entire campus more effectively than multi-user restrooms labeled “men’s” and “women’s.” Representatives of counseling and health services acknowledged the challenges of not having gender-related medical and psychological providers in Blacksburg, which necessitates students having to travel to Roanoke or farther for gender-confirming healthcare. Students noted and the health center director described climate issues that arose periodically as a result of anti-LGBQ and anti-trans attitudes amongst some health center staff; the director noted that her approach is one of ongoing attention to address these attitudes.

Students also talked about residence life and issues related to roommate selection, trans-inclusive housing options, and climate in the halls. Several students reported having good experiences with roommates, RAs, and residence hall staff, including the directors of living-learning communities. They remarked that the new-student housing form included some way to indicate openness to an LGBTQ+ roommate, though there was some concern about how the information was used (or not used) in placing roommates, resulting in unexpectedly hostile roommate situations.

Students expressed concern and frustration about the lack of availability of gender-inclusive housing in all areas of campus, including first-year living-learning communities (LLCs). The solution of placing trans undergraduate students in the Graduate Life Center (GLC) is a positive step toward providing safe housing for them, but removes them from the social, intellectual, and cultural opportunities available in traditional undergraduate halls. In addition, this solution ultimately affects LGBTQ+ graduate students as well, by reducing the number of GLC rooms available to them. Especially for newcomers to the Blacksburg community, the option for safe and affordable on-campus graduate housing reduces the additional effort that LGBTQ+ students face in identifying roommates and housing. The placement of trans undergraduates in the GLC is likely not the only reason incoming graduate students have to look off campus for housing, but having to go off campus presents particular additional burdens for new graduate students who are LGBTQ+ as they consider safety factors above and beyond what majoritized students might in their housing search.

Communications, advancement, and development came up a few times during the site visit and represent areas in the Division of Student Affairs that may present some opportunities. As noted in the section on climate, students felt that communication about LGBTQ+ issues from “higher ups” did not support a welcoming environment. And as noted in the section on the Center, a number of campuses have had fundraising success specifically in supporting LGBTQ+

programs and services. The development landscape on each campus is different, and it is common that there are protocols regarding which college, division, or program has “first dibs” on alums and other giving prospects; still, the existence of Ex Lapide and the active faculty/staff Caucus suggest that there may be some untapped potential for garnering support for LGBTQ+ programs and services. (Recommendations in these areas are included in previous sections; see recommendations 1.5 and 2.3.b.)

The relatively new CCC structure represents an opportunity for the continuous improvement of campus climate, programs, and services for LGBTQ+ students. Standing shoulder-to-shoulder with directors of resources centers for key students of color groups, the LGBTQ+ Center director is in a strong position to maximize a philosophy and value of intersecting identities. Co-programming, cross-center education, student leadership development, and shared professional development for professional and student staff can benefit specific populations and the Virginia Tech campus as a whole. There is also a risk of placing – or appearing to place – minoritized communities in competition with one another for resources (space, funds, staff, media attention). The review visit did not reveal any such tensions, but it will be important to be alert to this perception as the CCCs are fully staffed and enter the same “start up” mode that the LGBTQ+ Center is currently in.

Recommendations for Services and Resources within Division of Student Affairs

3.1 Create and provide resources for an ongoing LGBTQ+ health task force to collect baseline data on experiences of LGBQ and trans/GNB students at Cook Counseling and at Schiffert Health Center, benchmark best practices in college and community LGBTQ+ health and counseling, set goals for services and quality of experiences, and monitor progress toward goals.

3.1.a Consider local resources and gaps in services. Create a plan for addressing gaps between campus services, local services, and student needs, especially for gender-confirming healthcare.

3.1.b Consider including diversity/equity/inclusion goals in performance evaluations for all providers and staff at Cook Counseling and Schiffert Health Center. Provide ongoing training, feedback, and supervision to help staff meet expectations for inclusive, non-biased care.

3.2 Actively recruit additional LGBTQ+-identified staff for Cook Counseling³¹. Dr. Harrison is well known and respected by LGBTQ+ students, but relying on one person is an unwise plan and is not sustainable.

³¹ It is not unusual for campuses to claim that it is difficult to recruit and retain minoritized staff and faculty based on assumptions about regional politics and climate for diversity. Without a critical mass on campus, those LGBTQ+ faculty and staff (or people of color, or international colleagues, or members of other minoritized groups) pay a price in unacknowledged labor making it seem even more difficult to attract others (see Hirshfield, L. E., & Joseph,

3.3 Actively recruit LGBTQ+-identified providers at the Schiffert Health Center.

3.4 Continue to include LGBTQ+ inclusive plans for recreational sports and other wellness programming. The proposed inclusive facilities at the new rec center are a model for other spaces at Virginia Tech and for other colleges and universities. When they are completed, they would be a good example of prioritizing gender inclusive practice that could be featured in communications and professional networks (e.g., conference presentations, higher education facilities feature stories in *Chronicle of Higher Education*).

3.5 Continue to diversify residential options for LGBTQ+ students.

3.5.a Ensure that every student who wants to live in an LLC has a gender-inclusive option to do so.

3.5.b Develop a plan for facilities that will enable students of any gender to participate fully in residential communities appropriate to their year in school (e.g., first-year student, graduate student).

3.6 Work with local community to develop a way to identify LGBTQ+-friendly off-campus housing, especially for graduate students or others (e.g., transfer students) who may live off campus from the start of their time in Blacksburg.

3.7 Continue to provide training on LGBTQ+ inclusion and equity to residence life staff and all others (e.g., Corps-affiliated) who interact with students in the halls.

3.6.a Ensure that staff in the halls understand how to interrupt anti-LGBTQ+ micro-aggressions as well as report bias and harassment.

3.8 Review the housing form and clarify language related to possibility of having an LGBTQ+ roommate. This review would make sense as part of the campus-wide audit and process

T. D. (2012). 'We need a woman, we need a black woman': Gender, race, and identity taxation in the academy. *Gender and Education*, 24(2), 213-227. See also Bacon, J. (2006). Teaching queer theory at a normal school. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 52(1-2), 257-283. See also LaSala, M. C., Jenkins, D. A., Wheeler, D. P., & Fredriksen-Goldsen, K. I. (2008). LGBT faculty, research, and researchers: Risks and rewards. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, 20(3), 253-267.). After some time and unsuccessful efforts, it becomes a habit to acquiesce to this belief. Yet there are some established good practices for hiring and retaining minoritized employees and campuses are having success (see Piercy, F., Giddings, V., Allen, K., Dixon, B., Meszaros, P., & Joest, K. (2005). Improving campus climate to support faculty diversity and retention: A pilot program for new faculty. *Innovative Higher Education*, 30(1), 53-66. See also: Hardcastle, V. G., Furst-Holloway, S., Kallen, R., & Jacquez, F. (2018). Advancing and retaining underrepresented faculty in STEM: A program for value-driven career Success. In J. Hoffman, P. Blessinger, & M. Makhanya (Eds.), *Contexts for diversity and gender identities in higher education: International perspectives on equity and inclusion* (pp. 185-199). London: Emerald Publishing Limited.).

mapping noted in recommendation 1.4. Clarify for students how this information is used and what is (and is not) possible based on it.

3.9 Develop and implement plans within the CCC structure to support LGBTQ+ students of color in multiple spaces on campus. The Senior Director could lead this effort across CCC units to ensure that students of color are supported in ostensibly “LGBTQ+” spaces and LGBTQ+ students are supported in ostensibly “students of color” spaces.

3.10 Develop and implement plans for collaboration across cultural centers. Prioritize capacity-building activities that will activate students, faculty, and staff who could be allies/champions in their own communities but lack the skills and/or knowledge to do so.

FINDINGS: Services, Programs, and Resources outside Division of Student Affairs

As the experiences of LGBTQ+ students occur in every space and relationship at Virginia Tech, it is not surprising that there are a number of services and resources outside the Division of Student Affairs that affect them. Interactions with faculty and staff, communications from the university, facilities, and policies/procedures in daily life all play a role in the ways that LGBTQ+ students construct their lives and work toward success. Students and Caucus members stressed a need for campus-wide education about LGBTQ and, especially, trans inclusion. The relationship of OID to DSA and other units vis-à-vis educating and advocating for LGBTQ+ inclusion is an important one, as is the relationship of alumni relations and development, university communications, and the President’s Office. Campus facilities are insufficient to meet the needs of a changing student population, and students remarked about the ways that the Banner system was insufficiently flexible to handle name, sex, and pronoun changes.

Given the omnipresent sense of not feeling supported and wariness about safety, students and some others on campus wondered why there was no mandatory faculty and staff training about LGBTQ+ issues, as there is for other topics (e.g., Title IX and sexual harassment). The concept of “mandatory diversity training” for faculty is fraught with philosophical contradictions, resistance in faculty professional culture, and practical complications³². Requiring staff training on diversity carries some of the same challenges, though might be accomplished on some campuses if the political will existed to make it mandatory. A robust Safe Zone program (see recommendation 1.2) would at least provide a learning opportunity for the faculty and staff in the “Potential to Activate” zone, and if it could not be made mandatory it could be offered as one of a few required options and/or incentivized through release time for staff. Virginia Tech

³² See Bezrukova, K., Jehn, K. A., & Spell, C. S. (2012). Reviewing diversity training: Where we have been and where we should go. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 11(2), 207-227. See also Bezrukova, K., Spell, C. S., Perry, J. L., & Jehn, K. A. (2016). A meta-analytical integration of over 40 years of research on diversity training evaluation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 142(11), 1227-1274.

could build diversity education into annual performance reviews for staff and faculty, holding supervisors and department chairs responsible for implementing diversity plans, as the Graduate School currently does³³. Faculty development could partner with the Center to design and deliver tailored Safe Zone or other programs for faculty, and/or to provide some basic guidelines for being gender-inclusive.

Virginia Tech does not currently provide adequate facilities to accommodate trans/GNB people with restrooms, residence hall rooms, and locker rooms. No matter how inclined to move toward providing single-user and other gender-inclusive restrooms, every campus must start from the physical structure it has, and few (if any) institutions have made adequate funds available to address infrastructure changes for gender inclusion. Yet, any reasonable person can imagine what it would be like to take classes or work in one building and have to make the decision several times a day to walk 10-20 minutes across campus to use a restroom, or to use a facility where they may be met with hostility or threats to physical safety. There are at least two solutions, which can be implemented simultaneously: 1) Develop a plan and budget for creating gender inclusive restrooms and 2) Develop a campus culture where it feels safe for *every* campus member to use any multi-user “men’s” or “women’s” restroom or locker room of their choice.

Recommendations for Services and Resources outside the Division of Student Affairs

4.1 Consider having some combination of OID, HR, and Faculty Development support education on LGBTQ+ issues, possibly by providing resources to sustain Safe Zone or by collaborating with the Center to develop other education/training units.

4.2. Include LGBTQ+ education in all diversity-related faculty and staff trainings, if it is not already. The multi-dimensional nature of identities makes it important to address intersecting identities in trainings on, for example, sexual harassment, Title IX, and implicit bias.

4.3 Consider the possibility of requiring LGBTQ+ sensitivity training for all new faculty and staff. As noted, mandatory training for diversity, equity, and inclusion is a complicated issue, and there may be reasons not to require this education for all new employees. If mandatory LGBTQ+ sensitivity training is not implemented, consider how the same goals might be met through other means.

4.4 Include professional development on LGBTQ+ diversity, equity, and inclusion in annual employee reviews. Employees at all levels can set goals and be evaluated on their achievement in this area.

³³ According to Dean DePauw, the Graduate School has begun requiring departments to submit diversity plans for approval.

4.5 Include LGBTQ+ education and training for graduate teaching assistants in department diversity plans. Graduate TAs teach thousands of student credit hours at Virginia Tech, often in courses taken early in the undergraduate program. Training for graduate TAs, unlike requirements for full-time faculty, can be stipulated. Department diversity plans and any centralized training for graduate TAs can include LGBTQ+ awareness and sensitivity.

4.6 Develop clear standards for communicating about anti-LGBTQ+ incidents on and, as needed, off campus. Work with LGBTQ+ student leaders and community members to help them understand the overall philosophy guiding administrative and official statements.

4.7 Feature openly LGBTQ+ students, faculty, staff, and alums in campus and alumni publications and media. Show students that they are valued members of the community.

4.8 Develop a clear plan for increasing access to gender-inclusive restrooms and locker rooms, and set aside resources to accomplish this plan in a timely fashion. Work with members of the trans/GNB community to identify priority areas.

4.9 Provide and communicate clear expectations to the Virginia Tech community about the use of restrooms and locker rooms labeled “men’s” or “women’s” by people of diverse gender presentation. Link this expectation to the student code of conduct and bias reporting system so that people experiencing harassment or discrimination when using a restroom know how they can seek support and redress.

4.10 Accelerate changes in the Banner system to allow for full expression of genders and changes in name, sex, and pronouns. Students were pleased with some new options for changing their information in the student information system, but frustrated that there were several processes not yet made available through Banner.

4.10.a Consider a different way to assign student unique identifiers (PIDs) to avoid putting name-at-application in this unchangeable field. Many institutions use a number (not Social Security Number) or alpha-numeric that is not based on full name (e.g., lastname123).

APPENDIX

Materials Received in Advance of Review

- Report from Gallup survey: Virginia Tech Student Survey: Understanding students' experiences and perceptions of Virginia Tech
- Campus Pride Index Comparison (SCHEV peers comparison on Campus Pride rating items)
- LGBT Caucus Fall 2015 LGBTQ Climate Survey Report (authors: Marcy Schnitzer and Fang Fang)
- Division of Human Resources Organizational Development Virginia Tech LGBT+ Climate Survey Final Report (February 6, 2018) (presented by Ross Mecham)
- 2017 LGBTQ Climate Survey Intro Letter (Jordan Harrison and Rachel Weaver, Caucus Co-chairs)
- 2017 LGBTQ Climate Survey Presentation 9-2-18 (Jordan Harrison and Marcy Schnitzer)