

To: President Zulma R. Toro

From: The Task Force on the Assessment of the LGBT and the Ruthe Boyea Women's Centers

Dated: April 20, 2020

Re: Report Concerning the Assessment of the LGBT and the Ruthe Boyea Women's Centers

I. Background and Charge

In 2018, President Toro convened a Task Force on Sexual Misconduct, Bullying and Campus Climate, which ultimately recommended the retention of a third-party to review and help reengineer the Human Resources Department and the Office of Diversity and Equity (ODE), now known as the Office of Equity and Inclusion (hereinafter "OEI"). Sibson Consulting was engaged to conduct the review and in September 2019 submitted the first set of recommendations. One of the recommendations was:

"[c]onduct a comprehensive assessment of the Women's Center to better understand the Center's alignment to the greater ODE strategy, address the structure and model for the unit, and identify other opportunities to improve operational, organizational and cultural aspects of the unit."

Meanwhile, members of the LGBT Center's Advisory Board and a group of students associated with this Center met with President Toro on two separate occasions to recommend a review of the Center's mission and to advocate for expanding the services offered by the Center to include faculty and staff.

In response to these recommendations, President Toro convened a new Task Force to assess the LGBT Center and the Ruthe Boyea Women's Center (hereinafter "Women's Center") to determine the alignment of these Centers to the strategic priorities of CCSU, in particular, how these units contribute to fostering an inclusive, welcoming, and safe campus culture. The members of the Task Force are Attorney Carolyn Magnan, Task Force Chair and University Counsel; Dr. Michael Bartone, Co-Chair AERA Queer SIG, Program Coordinator and Assistant Professor in Literacy, Elementary and Early Childhood Education; Ms. Rachael Davis, Degree Auditor, Registrar's Office; Liliana Jimenez, Undergraduate Student; Amara Osorio, CCSU Undergraduate Student; Dr. Michael Russo, Director of Counseling and Student Development, Student Wellness Services; Aitana Sandoval, CCSU Graduate Student; Juliana Soares, CCSU Undergraduate Student; Danielle Wassmer, CCSU Undergraduate Student; and Dr. Louise Williams, AAUP President and Professor in the History Department. President Toro charged the Task Force with considering the following:

- Organizational structure and model
- Operation and programmatic effectiveness
- Current collaborations and opportunities for new partnerships
- Scope of ideal services and groups or populations served
- Effectiveness of communication strategy

II. Task Force Review Process

The Task Force met six times to discuss both the LGBT Center and the Women's Center. The Task Force collected and considered an extensive amount of information from the CCSU LGBT Advisory Board, a Strategic Planning Committee Subcommittee, and from the Committee on the Concerns of Women (hereinafter CCW), a Presidential Advisory Committee. This information is attached to this report. The Task Force also considered letters of support that were submitted for the Centers.

Additionally, the Task Force conducted interviews of the Interim Director of the LGBT Center, Dr. William Mann, and the Coordinator of the Women's Center, Ms. Jacqueline Cobbina-Boivin, asking a broad range of questions concerning the mission and services provided by their respective centers and the resources currently available to those centers. Both were invited to provide their views regarding additional resources necessary for their Centers. The Task Force also interviewed the two Vice Presidents currently charged with oversight of the Centers. Dr. Michael Jasek currently oversees the LGBT Center since it reports to Student Activities and Leadership Development, a department within the Student Affairs Division and Dr. Nancy "Rusty" Barceló, Interim Vice President, Office of Equity & Inclusion currently oversees the Women's Center. The Task Force asked similar questions of both Vice Presidents, also inviting them to provide their views regarding resources needed for the Centers. The Task Force also sought input from Mr. Salvatore Cintorino, CCSU's Interim Chief Facilities Officer, concerning the possibility of moving the LGBT Center to a different location since this request was made by both the LGBT Center's Interim Director and the LGBT Advisory Board.

Dr. Michael Bartone, a member of the Task Force, conducted seventeen focus group and individual interviews. Dr. Bartone interviewed groups connected to each Center and also interviewed others with no connections to the Centers. He prepared a summary of the issues that emerged from these interviews and provided it to the Task Force as well as providing an oral report to the Task Force. Dr. Louise Williams, a member of the Task Force, interviewed nine members of the Committee on the Concerns of Women and also provided a summary of the interview to the Task Force along with an oral report. Dr. Michael Russo, a member of the Task force, conducted an interview with a member of the Counseling staff at CCSU's Student Wellness Services - Counseling and an interview with the Director of Residence Life and provided summaries of the interviews to the Task Force along with an oral report.

The Task Force also considered information provided by the Provost on the staffing of the Academic Centers on campus, information from the Chief Financial Officer on the current funding and staffing of the LGBT and Women's Centers and the current University budget, and information from the Chief Human Resources Officer on the process for re-classifying the Women's Center Coordinator position and creating an Assistant Director position for the Women's Center and a Coordinator or Director position for the LGBT Center.

III. Summaries of the Requests Made for the Centers

The Women's Center

CCW's report on the Women's Center describes the history and mission of the Center as well as its programs and activities. It stresses the importance of the Center to the University and its role in addressing campus climate concerns, particularly those involving gender equity. CCW also stresses the Center's role in supporting CCSU's students, both female and male. CCW outlines the Center's need for

additional resources to be able to fulfill its mission. In particular, CCW notes that the Center is staffed by only one full time Coordinator, one part time university assistant, and 15 students, some of whom are on work study but others of whom are volunteers or interns and that this staffing level sometimes leaves the Center without staff since it runs programs outside of core office hours. CCW recommends that CCSU promote Cobbina-Boivin from Coordinator to Director, hire an Assistant Director, hire a part time University Assistant and hire 10 to 15 student workers for 5-6 hours a week. CCW also recommends that the budget of the Women's Center be increased from its current level since it notes that the budget has not been increased since 2000 and such an increase is needed to support its goals, for example, funding additional student workers, co-sponsoring programs, speakers, educational movies, leadership program licensing, student leadership workshops and conferences, ceremonies, awards and recognitions, and promoting the Center. CCW notes that the Center and its various programs need to be better advertised and that the Center should increase its collaboration with other areas on campus such as Residence Life and Athletics.

In Dr. Williams's interview with nine members of CCW, some of these members highlighted the importance of the Center to CCW and to the Women, Gender & Sexuality Studies Program (WGSS), noting that it forms a bridge between academics and students, promoting learning outside the classroom and providing a safe space for all women on campus. They also explained that it is particularly important for international students and that faculty often refer them there. CCW called for more integration between OEI and its Office of Victim Advocacy and Violence Prevention with the Center.

In her interview with the Task Force, Ms. Cobbina-Boivin endorsed CCW's recommendations and clarified that the Women's Center currently only funds about nine student workers and requested a budget increase from about \$50,000 to \$64,000. She noted that she was happy with the Center's current location in the Student Center and was not requesting that the Center be relocated. She also expressed a desire to have the Women's Center continue to report to the Vice President, Office of Equity and Inclusion since she noted that this best fit the mission of the Center, particularly its advocacy on campus climate issues. She noted that this was a national best practice.

In her interview with the Task Force, Dr. Barceló, Interim Vice President, Office of Equity and Inclusion, stated that the Women's Center was needed on campus because it was a safe space for students, helping them to be successful and was important because its advocacy raised critical issues on campus that need to be addressed. Her vision for the Center involves more collaboration within OEI, with other divisions on campus, particularly Academic Affairs, and with community organizations. She advocated for a full-time secretary for the Women's Center and for the Coordinator position to be changed from a ten-month position to a twelve-month position.

The focus groups and interviews conducted by Dr. Bartone of members of the CCSU community who were familiar with or connected to the Women's Center supported the recommendations made by CCW and Ms. Cobbina-Boivin in terms of staffing, a larger budget and remaining under OEI. Some of those interviewed seconded the opinion that there could be better collaboration between OEI and its Office of Victim Advocacy and Violence Prevention and the Center. Those who were not familiar with the Center noted that the Center was not marketed very well and should have a higher profile on campus.

In sum, the requests made for the Women's Center are as follows:

- Promoting the Coordinator to Director
- Changing the Coordinator position to a twelve-month position from a ten-month position
- Creating an Assistant Director position and hiring an Assistant Director
- Hiring a full time Secretary
- Increasing the budget by \$14,000 so that more student workers can be hired.

The LGBT Center

During the Spring 2019 semester, CCSU's LGBT Advisory Board Strategic Planning Subcommittee (hereinafter "Subcommittee") was charged with developing a plan to address the structure and mission of the University's LGBT Center, as well as for the Center's leadership. Through a grant awarded by the University, the Subcommittee hired a consultant to conduct student focus groups and interviews with key stakeholders in order to obtain information and necessary input. This work was completed during the Fall 2019 semester and the Subcommittee prepared a detailed report and a list of recommendations.

The Subcommittee's report recommends that the LGBT Center's staff be increased from a part-time Director to a full-time Director, one University Assistant, one Grad Assistant, and 7-8 student workers. It also recommends that The LGBT Center's budget be increased from its current budget of \$11,000 to \$30,000 in annual operating expenses (in addition to the increased full-time staff expense), which would make it comparable to CCSU's Women's Center. The Subcommittee also notes that it should be given better space by moving it to a central location that is large enough for all those who identify as LGBTQ+ to feel comfortable entering and spending time there, as well as offering some level of anonymity for those who are not "out." It expresses a desire to see the LGBT Center expand its mission from serving only students to serving students, faculty and staff in its advocacy and outreach. Accordingly, it recommends that the LGBT Center be organizationally placed under OEI instead of Student Affairs, noting that this would allow for greater freedom in working with Academic Affairs and the Faculty Senate on curriculum issues, would expand the Center's voice on campus, address and expand LGBTQ issues in Title IX trainings, and would serve and support the entire campus: students, faculty and staff.

The Subcommittee also suggests that the LGBT Center collaborate with Student Wellness Services to assist that department in becoming more inclusive of LGBTQ needs by hiring a transgender counselor, expanding its LGBTQ mental health services and awareness, offering post-exposure prophylaxis after exposure to HIV, and creating a transportation program for students and others to receive off-campus medical treatment. It points out that the LGBT Center should take an active role in encouraging expression of its diverse community by supporting students in expressing the intersectionality of their identities by identifying a student to serve as liaison to other Centers on campus and creating a course in diversity offered to first-year students. Additionally, it notes that the LGBT Center should take an active role in encouraging, supporting and providing resources for the development of curriculum specific to the LGBT experience by establishing an official and expanded partnership with WGSS and the GLBTQ Archives at Burritt Library, hiring a director who is competent in discussing and assisting curricular projects, and providing release time to a faculty member to work with the LGBT Center and the Faculty Senate in the development of LGBT-specific and LGBT-inclusive curriculum.

In an interview with the Task Force, Dr. William Mann, the current part-time Director of the LGBT Center and a CCSU faculty member, reiterated his support for these recommendations. He stated that the Center could do a better job promoting its mission and services if it was better resourced in terms of funding and space. He expanded on the importance of the Center to the LGBT student community and characterized it as “lifesaving” in some cases; in addition, he stated that the LGBT Center has been instrumental in the recruitment and retention of students who identify as LGBT. From his perspective, strengths of the Center include its ability to integrate LGBT resources across the University community (i.e., Residence Life, Student Affairs and academics), but he also noted that the LGBT Center could be more of a bridge between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs, as well as expand its vision and coordinate available resources. He also commented on the demographics of students who access the LGBT Center, explaining that approximately ten to fifteen students seek services through the Center on a daily basis and most are white students who identify as gay, lesbian or transgender and that about two thirds of these students live on campus. He stressed that he would like to see the Center work with a more diverse population of LGBTQ students, including more commuter students. With regard to space, Dr. Mann explained that the current space (formerly two custodial closets) is far too small, not confidential or safe (conversations can be heard in the hall), and “outs” students since it is the only program on the third floor of the Student Center. He expressed his belief that the Center should serve both students and faculty so each can learn from the other. Lastly, Dr. Mann supported the Subcommittee’s recommendation that the LGBT Center be located within OEI instead of Student Affairs. In his opinion, locating the Center under OEI would provide students with more opportunities to impact campus trainings, influence position statements, and expand its constituency to include services for faculty and staff.

In his interview with the Task Force, Dr. Michael Jasek, Vice President for Student Affairs, stated that the mission of the Student Affairs division is to support a student-centered learning environment that encourages student development and inspires student success. As such, he expressed his view that the LGBT Center should remain student-focused and under the Division of Student Affairs. He described the synergy created between the LGBT Center and other Centers within Student Affairs, including Wellness, Education, Counseling and Health services, Residence Life, and Student Activities and Leadership Development (hereinafter “SALD”); all of which coordinate and work together to meet the needs of LGBT students. He expressed concern that if the Center were to move out of Student Affairs, this collaboration could be lost, as would be supplemental funding provided by SALD. Dr. Jasek also reported that fifty-two percent of LGBT Centers in universities across the United States report to Student Affairs. Dr. Jasek agreed with Dr. Mann that there is a strong need for the LGBT Center on campus and that with enhanced staffing (a FT Coordinator and a graduate assistant) and an increased budget there is more the Center could do to promote its services, and that the Center needs better space. He stated that he has considered whether an off-campus house might better meet the Center’s needs. He also agreed that the LGBT Center plays a significant role in the recruitment and retention of students who identify as LGBTQ, but with greater visibility and resources the Center could have an even more significant impact.

Focus groups and individual interviews conducted by Dr. Bartone, as well as interviews conducted by Dr. Russo, of members of the CCSU community who were familiar with or connected to the LGBT Center supported the recommendations made by the Subcommittee, Dr. Mann and Dr. Jasek in terms of the need for increased staffing, a larger budget and improved space which is larger, more private both

within the Center and within the surrounding area so that students are not “outed” by entering the Center. They also concurred that the Center has been a tool for student recruitment and retention. Students expressed a desire for the Student Wellness Center to hire a full-time counselor whose work specifically addresses queer youth. They also expressed a preference that the Center move under OEI.

In sum, the requests made for the LGBT Center are as follows:

- Creating a full time Director position and making a hire
- Hiring a Graduate Assistant
- Increasing the budget from \$11,000 to \$30,000 which will fund more student workers
- Moving the LGBT Center to a larger and more confidential space
- Changing the reporting relationship of the LGBT Center from Student Affairs to OEI.

IV. Task Force Recommendations

After careful consideration of the information presented to it, the Task Force respectfully makes the following recommendations.

Regarding The Women’s Center:

- OEI and Human Resources should promptly evaluate the duties of the Women’s Center Coordinator to determine whether the position warrants reclassification from Coordinator to Director; should the position warrant reclassification, its current occupant would be reclassified under the SUOAF collective bargaining agreement;
- The Coordinator/Director position should be promptly changed from a ten-month position to a twelve-month position;
- Within the next three years, an Assistant Director position should be created and an Assistant Director hired;
- The current University Assistant position (19 hours weekly) should remain in place and, until an Assistant Director can be hired, an additional University Assistant (19 hours weekly) should be hired;
- The budget should be increased by \$14,000 from the current budget of about \$50,000 to \$64,000 to allow for the hiring of ten to fifteen Student Workers for five to six hours a week per student and the budget should also be increased to allow for the hiring of the additional University Assistant until the Assistant Director can be hired;
- OEI should clarify the roles of the Office of Victim Advocacy and the Women’s Center and work to enhance the collaboration between these two areas.

Regarding The LGBT Center:

- The LGBT Center should be reassigned from reporting to Student Affairs to OEI to allow for expansion of its services from just students to students, faculty and staff;

- Within the next three years, OEI and Human Resources should evaluate the duties of the LGBT Center Director and create a full-time Coordinator or Director position to be governed by the SUOAF collective bargaining agreement and hire a full-time Coordinator or Director. In the meantime, OEI and Human Resources should create a part-time SUOAF position and hire a part-time person to fill this position;
- The University Assistant position (19 hours weekly) should continue to be funded;
- A Graduate Assistant should be hired;
- The budget should be increased by \$19,000 from \$11,000 to \$30,000 in order to fund the University Assistant and the hiring of seven to eight Student Workers;
- The LGBT Center should be provided with a larger, more centrally located space in the Student Center as soon as reasonably possible;
- The Task Force encourages collaboration between the Student Wellness Center and the LGBT Center to develop programming geared toward meeting the needs of students who identify as LGBTQ+, as well as to hire a counselor who specializes in queer identity (i.e. gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, non-binary, gender fluid, pansexual, agender, etc.) when the next opportunity arises to hire a counselor.

The Task Force thanks you for the opportunity to examine both of these important centers and is available to meet with you should you wish further information concerning its recommendations.