

Students' Association of Mount Royal University

Pride Center Focus Group - Students

April 17th, 2018

Facilitator: Brendan Correia

Note-takers: Cara Thompson, Brendan Correia

Students' Association of Mount Royal University

Pride Center Focus Group – REC

May 8th, 2018

Facilitator: Shereen Samuels

Note-taker: Cara Thompson

Q1: If you imagine the perfect Pride Centre, how would you describe it?

Q2: Do you have any other ideas for improvements to space, programs, services, or roles related to the Pride Centre?

There were seven themes that all feedback fell into, listed below:

The physical space is specifically for the LGBTQ2+ student community; clear and focused mandate

- “Vibrant”
- “Diversity”
- “Warmth”
- “Community”
- “Sanctuary”
- Comfortable, with a good atmosphere
- Has a distinct culture that differentiates it from the other centers, particularly PSC
- “Alive”
- “Sustained/Renewable” – new people coming in over time, community members may change but the community feeling remains
- Intersectionality – sub communities need to be represented and seen. Historically the space has been largely focused for white LGBTQ2+ members, and POC and people with disabilities have felt or been made to feel unwelcome in the space
- Consistently lots of people in the space, so that it feels busy. Easier to walk into a busy space than one with only a couple of people in it
- Doesn't need to always feel positive (people need to have difficult conversations sometimes), but important to have people in the room
- Pride Center should be about more than sex and relationships; outside the community there is sometimes the assumption that the community is only about those things, and we shouldn't recreate those assumptions with the space and the programming
- Room needs established principles and values (Accountable Spaces works great, but needs to be upheld intentionally)

Full time coordinator in the room

- Someone who is qualified, has expertise and connections to the community
- Someone to answer questions who is open and accepting

- Someone who can uphold the qualities and values the room represents
- Someone to make sure the space stays clean and looks cared for
- Someone to steer conversations, deal with triggers
- Someone to fill the space consistently so others feel comfortable entering the room
- Someone who can uphold consistent hours
- Someone to lead/anchor programming design
- Someone to lead/train/support volunteers and PT staff to do peer-to-peer engagement; staff doesn't have to be the person on point at all times, but they are the consistent anchor and presence
- Person in charge needs to be compensated because creating this space is work and it affects those in charge
- Understand that there are limitations for a single individual; needs to be supported by volunteers and PT staff if appropriate

Peer-to-peer model using students as volunteers and PT staff

- Volunteers are important, new students don't always want to talk to a staff person, or feel they can trust a staff person; peer to peer model of service provision is very important
- Volunteers can be passionate, but not necessarily trained or have lived experience
 - Too much onus on them to create this space even if they aren't comfortable doing so
 - Having people who are not qualified can do more harm than good
- Room mentors were the closest to achieving this environment, although the role was flawed
- With just students/room mentors monitoring the space, they can't always help in every situation or don't feel like they have the authority to help their peers or be heard by them when they attempt to assert authority to maintain the standards of the space
- Room mentor/administration assistant role could return with the support of a coordinator
 - Provides a paid position for people in the community
 - Provides an opportunity to learn, grow, develop skills
- Volunteers dedicated to the space to support the coordinator, lead and develop programming
- A specific, dedicated Pride Centre volunteer role needs to be developed, with specific training (having a general Peer Support role hasn't worked, and makes the specific needs of the Pride Centre invisible)
- Need to have clarity around what the difference is between volunteers and PT staff

Consistent programming

- More advertising and social media presence
- programming can reach out to broader community as well (broader community programming can also happen in other spaces)
- programming should not just be about sex, because LGBTQ2+ lives aren't just about sex
- Holding the programming consistently even if students aren't showing up for it
- Programming planned to start when NSO begins
 - Having summer staff to plan the programming
- The programming helps to promote established principles and values of the space
- Provides education and resources
- Make intent of programming known up front; for instance, if Crafternoon is specifically queer programming, ensure that the queer element – discussion topics for each session, etc. – are clearly

articulated. This helps make the intent of the programming clear, so people coming in to access it understand what they're coming into. This was the case in the past, wasn't clear this year, people were sometimes surprised/resistant to having discussions outside of the craft

- There is a need on campus for sexual health information (safe sex and relationships)
- All student groups need this information, not just LGBTQ2+
- All centers could provide this programming, or provide space for this programming to happen
- Different programmers working together for intersectional workshops
- It's clear that currently the RIS Programmer is the one with the most expertise in this area
- Sometimes programming should be self-serving/not concerned about including everyone
- Intersectionality – sub communities need to be represented. Historically the space has been safest for white LGBTQ2+ members, and POC and people with disabilities have felt or been made to feel unwelcome in the space. Programming can address this

Up-to-date, appropriate resources

- Library and paper resources that are maintained and updated regularly, and easily visible/accessible for newcomers
- Flyers and physical resources for students to leave the room with
- Includes trained people with expertise and knowledge, both staff and volunteers

Welcoming physical space

- Looks welcoming with appropriate furniture (chairs, tables, couches) and decoration
- More furniture
- Study space (loss of tables this year wasn't good; people don't always want/need to be talking, having the ability to share space together while studying is also important, bring tables back)
- Room needs established principles and values (Accountable Spaces works great, but needs to be upheld intentionally)

Campus presence

- Needs to reach out to students early and often, so they know it's there (this year, felt as though there was less advertising for the Pride Center specifically)
- The goal is that SAMRU identifies as a campus lead/expert on this kind of service, and steps up and advocates for this community and this programming unapologetically
- MRU has told us there's a campus need for this space, and that they don't have the capacity currently to provide it
- Creating bridges between other populations, the broader student community
- Reaching out to Mount Royal and working with other departments collaboratively, and as a campus leader
- Reach outside of Mount Royal
- SAMRU can't try to please everyone and we may not be perfect; we need to balance serving specific populations while also including everyone