Weber State University Women's Center Program Review 2010

Conducted by

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Introduction

Since the early 1960's, college women's centers have existed in the U.S. and are still being established on campuses in response to continuing gender equity concerns. Today, over 490 campus-based women's centers exist. Whether old or new, large or small, student run or professionally run, these centers share a core purpose – to "respond to individual and institutional needs to support women in achieving their educational goals, encouraging them to think more broadly about fields of study and leadership positions, and advancing women in higher education."[1]

40 years ago when Women's Centers were just beginning to emerge, they tended to focus on assisting women in gaining entrance into academic institutions. Now that women students tend to be in the majority, the focus has shifted to "supporting access for specific subsets who continue to be underrepresented, fostering the full integration of women students once they are on campus and advocating for equity and change in the seemingly intractable area of traditional sex and gender roles."[2]

The Weber State University Women's Center, established in 1980 as a Women's Resource Center, has a long and rich history of advocating for and supporting the success of women students. It exemplifies some of the following qualities of a women's center – a visible and well-appointed facility, a full-time director, opportunities for student involvement in the Center's operations, and grateful, passionate students and community supporters for whom the Women's Center has made a profound difference. That significant resources have been allocated to an external review of the WSU Women's Center demonstrates the University's commitment to continuous improvement and ongoing support of this vital program.

We have chosen to organize our report using the current *CAS Standards and Guidelines for Women Student Programs and Services (WSPS)*. The standards and guidelines fall into 11 categories: (1) mission, (2) programs, (3) leadership, (4) human resources, (5) ethics and legal responsibilities, (6) equity and access, (7) diversity, (8) campus and external relations, (9) financial resources, (10) facilities, technology and equipment, and (11) assessment and evaluation.

It is our hope that this report will speak in a compelling way about the Women's Center's strengths and ways in which it supports Weber State University's mission and that our recommendations will be useful to the staff in their quest for continued improvement.

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[1] CAS Standards Contextual Statement for Women Student Programs and Services, 2009, p. 390
[2] CAS Standards Contextual Statement for Women Student Programs and Services, 2009, p.390

Weber State University
Women's Center
Program Review Executive Summary
(Except where otherwise noted, recommendations are directed to the Women's Center)

Mission
The programs of a women's center are shaped by the center's mission and must support that of the university. The campus culture and structure both have an important impact on a center's mission. WSU's Women's Center mission was visible in printed materials and implied on the Center's website. Providing a clearly-defined and widely-acknowledged mission will strengthen the purpose and position of the Women's Center at WSU.

- The Women's Center should consider examining their mission statement and goals in light of this Program Review and meet with stakeholders to revise both.
- Make sure the Mission Statement is visible in the Center and on campus, and that Center staff, colleagues and stakeholders understand and can articulate the mission. It should also be clear that campus and community collaborators understand how their unit missions intersect and support the Women's Center.
- The Women's Center staff and advisory board should develop a strategic plan with both short term and long term goals which are very specific, with dates for goals to be accomplished, how success will be measured and who is responsible for implementation.

Programs
The Women's Center's program has excellent potential. Some traditional programs happen each year. Overall, the Center staff should start planning their programs with specific student learning and development outcomes that prepare students for satisfying and productive lives, work and civic participation.[3] In addition to educating the campus and community through events, the Center plays an important role in the retention and success of WSU students by providing safe space, resources and referrals, learning and leadership opportunities and advocacy on behalf of women students.

- Develop programs with active participation from student employees, Women's Studies students, Social Work students, student clubs /organizations and other stakeholders.
- Encourage activism and social change.
- Partner with offices charged with tracking and addressing student retention and graduation rates, as well as those engaged in admissions, financial aid, advising and counseling.
- Work with Student Affairs departments and academic departments to collaborate on programs that reach a rich diversity of the student body.
- Enhance the visibility of the Center with underserved groups by planning programs that relate directly to students of color and international students.
- Develop an internship or volunteer position specifically to look at other Women's Centers for new ideas in programming, website development and service delivery.
- Collaborate with Veterans Affairs to create unique programs targeting the women veteran student population

Leadership
As campus-based women's centers continue to serve the needs of university communities, leaders continue to grow and emerge with a theoretical understanding of and vast experience in meeting the

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[3] CAS Standards for Women Student Programs and Services, 2009, p. 393

needs of women in higher education. While similar to the needs of other historically-marginalized populations, women's needs remain unique and must continue to be acknowledged to avoid creating unintentional tensions and unanswerable choices for community members.

- The professional staff at the Women's Center should be given adequate professional development opportunities, particularly to interact with others engaged in Women's Center work.
- Partnership with the Student Services office at the Davis Campus is essential for a seamless coordination of services and programs between the two campuses.
- The administration at Weber State should consider changing all titles that include "counselor" unless that person is a *licensed* mental health professional
- Empower professional, support, and student staff to take leadership and demonstrate independence in program planning, selection of student staff and other functions of the Center.

Human Resources
The value of human resources should not be ignored within any organization. The credentials, professional experiences, and social capital held by individuals should be acknowledged and rewarded. Adequate staffing must be provided to meet the needs of the campus community and provide the human resources to fulfill the center's mission.

- All students from both the Women's and Non-Traditional Centers should experience an extensive training period in which they learn about all of the support services within Weber State and throughout the Ogden and Davis communities for women, non-traditional students, student parents and those seeking support of any kind.
- Building a thriving volunteer base can expand the capacity of the Center in its outreach and programming.
- The Women's Center should consider using the existing "Student Advisory Board" as a "Student Programming Board" and initiate major changes in creating a true "Advisory Board" consisting of faculty, staff, students and community stakeholders to advise, evaluate and advocate for the work of the Women's Center.
- We recommend that the Women's Center's student staffing be increased to provide consistency in the day-to-day operations of the Center and allow the Director to more fully address policy issues, teaching, external relations, fund raising and grant-writing opportunities.
- We recommend that collaborative training for all of the Women's Centers' and Non-Traditional Student Centers' staff members be held to increase ability to serve students, achieve goals and enhance collaboration/communication.

Ethics and Legal Responsibilities
The director and other staff appear to be highly ethical in delivering services. Training is provided to student staff on office procedures, campus and community resources, and FERPA. Confidentiality and respect are practiced as a standard procedure.

- Ensure that all employees have thorough knowledge of ethical and legal expectations.
- Develop a statement of ethics for how the Women's Center employees will conduct themselves and the work of the Center.
- Staff members must use reasonable and informed practices to limit the liability exposure of the institution.
- Encourage and confirm Clery Act reporting and Title IX and FERPA compliance.
- Include training for Women's Center staff regarding applicable responsibilities of the Women's Center to adhere to regulations.

- Ensure that there is no perception by participants or student staff that counseling is occurring within the Women's Center. Brief assessment and referral can be done by student staff with appropriate training.

Equity and Access

Women's centers and their staff have a long history of identifying and addressing issues of equity, access and social justice. The history of women's centers in the U.S. has been grounded in dismantling personal, institutional and societal systems of power and privilege. A constant assessment and campus scan must be a part of each women's center within higher education.

- Assess the perception of the Women's Center being a "white, straight Women's Center" or a "center for single moms." If findings support this perception, develop an action plan to address this.
- Ensure that Women's Center staff members are knowledgeable of the different identity development processes of individual women and the complex intersection of ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation.

Diversity

The Women's Center provides a safe, nurturing space for people's humanity to be respected and honored.

- Continue to assess the needs of students and the programs, services and support provided by the Women's Center.
- Continue to align with partners in the Diversity and Unity Center and the Multicultural Center
- Address the perceptions highlighted in the Equity and Access section of this report.
- Consider programs with men as the primary audience. If Centers do not partner with men, they cannot create change.
- Consider development of a diversity action plan to address perceptions and create lasting change.

Campus and External Relations

The Women's Center has mixed relationships with multiple offices on and off campus. The depth and breadth of these interconnections enhances the service and support provided to the community.

- Promote community events related to women on the Women's Center website which can bring more visibility to what is happening in Ogden. Reciprocal advertising by these community agencies will draw more participants to Center events and programs.
- Invite two or three members of the community to join the Advisory Board to assist with public relations, draw upon community perspectives, and enhance fund raising.
- Nurture the Center's relationship with the Non-Trad Center, Multicultural Center, Diversity and Unity Center, Counseling and Psychological Services Office and build a strong partnership with Women's Studies and other academic departments.
- Outreach to graduate women and networking opportunities for women across disciplines should be supported by the Women's Center.
- Networking with Women's Centers across the country is an important step toward learning and growing.
- Examine what it might mean to be a feminist organization with a social justice and activist perspective.

Financial Resources
The Women's Center should develop a positive, open relationship with its student-funding sources. Additionally, other sources of funding through grants and donations should be explored.

- The participation of students in the budgeting process provides an important life skill and gives direct evidence of the benefit of the Center to students.
- Examine current budget allocations for their alignment with expectations for the Center's operating, programs, and events.
- Develop and implement a grant writing plan.
- Including someone from the student fee committee in strategic planning would guarantee support for any budget increases in the future and allow for additional student participation in decision-making.
- Recruit graduate students for grant-writing internship/practicum experiences.
- Develop a database of potential financial supporters and nurture relationships with them.

Facilities, Technology and Equipment
The physical location of the WSU Women's Center provides visibility, awareness and access to multiple community members. The physical space is vital to external and internal stakeholders of the Women's Center. The Center appears to have been adequately supplied with computers and other equipment to fulfill its mission, goal, and objectives.

- Conduct an environmental audit of the space that is used by participants at the Women's Center. Ensure that the space is accessible and identifiable as friendly to multicultural, queer, non-traditional students as well as students with disabilities.
- Conduct a review of all Center web-based materials and establish links to the Women's Center on other campus websites (and likewise, offer to link other campus partners on the Women's Center website).
- Make the Center's website interactive to reach the regional campuses/distance learners and answer questions for those who may not visit the Women's Center's physical space.
- Ensure that computers and software do not become dated and keep this in the long-range plan for the Women's Center.
- Explore options that will attract students like Facebook, Twitter, blogs and YouTube.
- Utilize staff development workshops offered by Student Affairs Technology to provide training for staff and students in regards to online development.

Assessment and Evaluation
Higher education continues to be held accountable to all stakeholders. WSU's Women's Center is beginning a journey toward continuous assessment that will help inform its programs and services in the future.

- Provide the WSU community access to assessment project findings and ensure that quality and impact of service are widely known and available.
- Continue to assess programs, services, staff and outcomes and consider using the CAS Self-Assessment Guide for WSPS as a framework.
- Undertake regular needs assessment surveys to determine perceptions of the Center and the needs of a wider constituency of students, staff and faculty.
- Conduct a comparative analysis of Weber State's Women's Center with peer institutions and with other institutions of similar size and scope to WSU (see list of Centers provided by reviewers).

- Revise Program Evaluation forms by adding two questions that ask, "What one or two new things did you learn from this program?" and "How did you find out about this program?"
- Learning outcomes should not only be assessed on a regular basis, but members of the staff should be able to talk clearly and decisively on the mission of the Center, what they have learned from working at the Center and what participants can anticipate if they seek out the programs and services of the Center.
- The staff at the Women's Center should keep track of success stories.
- Develop a response to the External Reviewer Report that incorporates an action matrix with visible, measurable outcomes. Provide community access to the Program Review Report, the Women's Center's Response to the Report and the action plan matrix.

Conclusion and Future Trends for Women's Centers Nationally

The WSU Women's Center serves the vital and unique function of providing important support for women students as they work to achieve their educational goals. When women are valued and encouraged to live up to their full potential, everyone benefits as does the institution as a whole.

WSU's Women's Center is particularly strong in the areas of programming for single moms, publications for new and returning students, the central location of its facility, and the visibility of its programs. The Center has a rich history at WSU, having existed in various forms for 30 years.

Weber State University has an excellent opportunity for the development and growth of an important resource on campus. The Women's Center can be an active and innovative partner in taking WSU to new levels of excellence in the 21st Century.

Excerpts from CAS Standards for WSPS: "The purpose of WSPS is to promote a supportive, equitable, and safe environment for women. Mission statements must be consistent with the mission of the institution and with professional standards. WSPS in higher education must enhance overall educational experiences by incorporating student learning and student development outcomes in its mission…" (p. 393).

Regular review of the mission and goals should be undertaken with all stakeholders and as times change, missions undoubtedly will change.

The mission statement of the WSU Women's Center reads as follows: *The mission of the Women's Center is to advocate, educate and empower individuals by providing resources and support on campus and in the community through facilitating connections and through advising students and support groups. The Center actively seeks to develop programs and services in which women are supported, encouraged and empowered to achieve their academic and personal goals.*

A mission to "advocate, educate and empower individuals" is excellent and meets the expectations set forth in the CAS Standards and Guidelines. It might be worthwhile to examine the mechanisms by which the mission is carried out. Does "facilitating connections and advising students/support groups" reach the broadest number of students at Weber State University?

The goals for the WSU Women's Center are quite broad and repeat much of what is in the Mission Statement.

Goals should be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely. Additionally, goals should answer the following: Who is involved? What do I want to accomplish? What is the time frame? What are the requirements and constraints? What are the specific reasons, purpose or benefits of accomplishing the goal? How will I measure success and impact?

RECOMMENDATION: **The Women's Center should consider examining their mission statement and goals in light of this Program Review and meet with stakeholders to revise both.**[4]

RECOMMENDATION: Once the mission statement has been reviewed and possibly revised, make sure it is visible in the Center and on campus, and that Center staff, colleagues and stakeholders understand and can articulate the mission. It should also be clear that campus and community collaborators understand how their unit missions intersect and support the Women's Center.

RECOMMENDATION: **The Women's Center staff and advisory board should develop a strategic plan with both short term and long term goals which are very specific, with dates for goals to be accomplished, how success will be measured and who is responsible for implementation.**

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[4] Recommendations in **bold type** are seen as priorities.

The two programs that were consistently mentioned as clearly making a difference in the lives of their participants are the Single Mom's Support Group and the Mujeres da Poder. Beyond these two very visible programs, there was concern expressed that passive programs like the white flags and Silent Witness project while visible, are not having the intended effect on the campus community. Because there is no ability to gauge the impact of passive programs and because they have been repeated so often, the consequence has been negative feedback from both faculty and students.

The Women's Center is uniquely positioned to take leadership in education and prevention efforts related to sexual and domestic violence. Bringing well known speakers to campus and partnering with others who are interested in planning events will build awareness on campus differently than a display. Additionally, as a potential first responder for sexual assault survivors, the Women's Center might consider calling a meeting of all other potential first responders to establish departmental protocols so that everyone understands fully what the procedures are in every office where a survivor might be referred.

Programs offered through the Women's Center should focus on women's physical and mental health, personal safety, sexual assault and relationship violence, healthy relationships, feminism, leadership, spirituality, current events, and global issues. Additional service learning, internship and volunteer opportunities can enhance the education of students and the visibility of the Center.

Traditionally, programming that comes out of Women's Centers functions as an extension of the education received in the classroom. Working with academic partners in Women's Studies, International Programs, the science and technology fields, Education and Social Sciences can enhance the quantity and quality of programs offered throughout the year. Working with Student Affairs partners can develop buy-in from colleagues as well as enhance opportunities for student leaders from across campus.

Activism and direct action to create change have always been a part of Women's Centers and should be encouraged at Weber State. From an outsider's perspective, there are two immediate opportunities for activism around 1) appropriate lactation space in university buildings that meet federal standards (attached); and 2) the very inappropriate t-shirts that are being sold to promote Salt Lake, Utah that are visible in several locations (I realize this was NOT in Ogden, but any woman (or man) should be offended at the word being used to encourage "tourism" in your state capitol.)

Hand in hand with the *programs* presented are the *services* offered to a broad range of students across campus. A perception exists that services at the Women's Center duplicate services offered in other

parts of campus, namely Admissions, First Year Experience, Student Success, Counseling and Psychological Services, Non-Traditional Student Center, Financial Aid, Academic Advising and the Multicultural Center. While the personal outreach and support for single mothers and Latina community members is a point of pride for the Women's Center (and should be continued in my opinion), if the amount of time spent on these two programs is extraordinarily high, perhaps partnering with these other offices would relieve the two full-time Women's Center staff members.

RECOMMENDATION: **Develop programs with active participation from student employees, Women's Studies students, Social Work students, student clubs/organizations and other stakeholders.**

RECOMMENDATION: **Encourage activism and social change.**

RECOMMENDATION: Work with Student Affairs departments and academic departments to collaborate on programs that reach a rich diversity of the student body.

RECOMMENDATION: Enhance the visibility of the Center with underserved groups by planning programs that relate directly to students of color, lesbian/bi/trans/queer students and international students (and plan these programs *with* these students rather than "for" these students).

RECOMMENDATION: **Develop an internship or volunteer position specifically to look at other Women's Centers for new ideas in programming, website development and service delivery.**

RECOMMENDATION: Collaborations between the WC and the Veterans Affairs could create unique programs targeting the women veteran student population

RECOMMENDATION: **Partner regularly with offices charged with admitting, orienting, advising, counseling, funding, and supporting students as well as those tracking and addressing student retention and graduation rates. Additionally, re-evaluate the amount of time spent one-on-one with students on these functions.**

Leadership

Excerpts from CAS Standards for WSPS: "Because effective and ethical leadership are essential to the success of all organizations, WSPS leaders with organizational authority for the programs and services must: set goals and objectives based on the needs of the population served and desired student learning and development outcomes (p.394).

One of the greatest assets at Weber State's Women's Center is the leadership of Carol Merrill. The continuity of her leadership, her knowledge of the campus and community resources and her compassion were acknowledged widely as strengths.

The internal organizational structure and management of the Women's Center have recently been diminished by two full time staff members after individuals resigned from their positions. While this featured prominently in the self-study, several individuals expressed doubt that these positions were necessary and that perhaps other efficiencies might be explored.

The lack of partnerships with Women Studies, various Student Affairs departments and with the Student Services office at the Davis Campus appears to have created tension and division instead of the increased collaboration and sense of community that can occur with open communication and shared responsibility.

The perception that counseling is taking place within the Women's Center must be addressed. The frequency of one-on-one meetings might need to be tracked and even reduced to make room for a wider variety of opportunities for a broader cross section of the campus.

There are a number of possible recommendations for enhancing the human resources without increasing the budget including the use of more interns and volunteers. Future staffing needs should emerge within a few years of enacting some of these recommendations.

The Women's Center staff professional development seems to be via the American Association for University Women (AAUW). This excellent organization can contribute a great deal of support in terms of research and grant funding and this relationship should be allowed to continue.

Another organization that might be explored is the National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) which has a Women's Center professionals' listserve, resources on their website for members on assessment, annual reports, surveys, and resources, and a national pre-conference for Women's Center Directors and others. This year's Women's Center pre-conference will be held in Denver on November 11, 2010 (with the rest of the NWSA conference to follow over the next 3 days). There will be up to 115 Women's Center Directors there and this would be an excellent opportunity for both Sarah and Carol to connect with them.

Lastly, NASPA is another great organization that has a Women's Center contingent, albeit smaller than the NWSA.

RECOMMENDATION: **The professional staff at the Women's Center should be given adequate professional development opportunities, particularly to interact with others engaged in Women's Center work. Either the NWSA or NASPA can provided excellent opportunities.** Listserves, publications and web resources can also enhance the professional development of both the professional and the student staff members.

RECOMMENDATION: **Partnership with the Student Services office at the Davis Campus is essential for a seamless coordination of services and programs between the two campuses.**

RECOMMENDATION: **The administration at Weber State should consider changing all titles that include "counselor" unless that person is a *licensed* mental health professional.** The implication that "counseling" is taking place within the Women's Center is problematic and potentially a legal liability. There is also confusion on the part of the student fee funding board when they perceive (correctly) that there is already a University Counseling Center and the Women's Center may be duplicating services. Even if the one-on-one meetings with students are for purposes of evaluation and referral, which is what all Women's Centers do, it should not be necessary to do an intake and assessment which is more indicative of a Counseling Center.

RECOMMENDATION: A time audit might be conducted to determine how professional staff members use their time. Staff members should estimate the percentage of time spent in one-on-one meetings with students, on community relations, in meetings, planning programs, writing reports, doing correspondence, etc.

Human Resources

Excerpts from CAS Standards for WSPS: "*WSPS must be staffed adequately by individuals qualified to accomplish the mission and goals…Student employees and volunteers must be carefully selected, trained, supervised, and evaluated. (They) must be provided clear and precise job descriptions, pre-service training based on assessed needs, and continuing staff development*" (p. 395).

While students are the heart of the WSU Women's Center staff, the presence of a full-time professional director is critical to the continued success of the Women's Center. The current staffing structure includes a full-time director, a full-time "counselor/advocate" and a half-time secretary. There is one work study student at 20 hours per week and about 4-5 part-time student employees who receive tuition waivers or scholarships. There is usually at least one practicum student from Social Work department each semester; and this is considered a highly competitive practicum.

Procedures and guidelines for application, interviewing and selection of student staff members remains unclear as it seems scholarship recipients are determined by the Director alone. Expectations for employees doing programming appear to be coordinated with appropriate oversight by the director and the counselor advocate.

The training for practicum students is outlined in a Women's Center Practicum Student Manual, though there are several references to the one-on-one "counseling" taking place with students as part of the practicum experience. Training for student staff members was not entirely clear, though students who met with the reviewers felt they were all at various stages of knowledge about campus and community resources. It was explained that the Student Advisory Board is where staff development takes place.

While volunteers can never be equivalent to paid staff, and coordination and recognition of volunteers requires creativity and perseverance, the possibilities are nearly limitless when a good cohort of students, community members and other friends of the Women's Center are recruited to serve. Building a consistent, dedicated group of volunteers can enhance all aspects of what the Women's Center does and can increase the capacity of programs and services offered. Excellent volunteers one year can turn into outstanding staff members the following year.

Several individual stakeholders discussed the merits of creating an official *Advisory Board* for the Women's Center. A true Advisory Board could enhance the relationship of the Women's Center with faculty and staff as well as provide an official mechanism for providing useful feedback to the Director from various constituencies and promote Center activities among those constituencies. In addition, Advisory Board members could serve as effective lobbyists within and outside of the University for the growth of Center resources.

RECOMMENDATION: The Women's Center and the Non-Traditional Student Center have been intentionally located within the same space. This should be looked at in terms of how each individual Center can best enhance the capabilities, programs and services of the other. For instance, **cross-training of all personnel (professional and student) would ensure that participants coming in to access either Center will receive accurate information and it will not matter with whom they may interact. Additionally, including the staff at the Davis campus would benefit collaboration, communication and cross-training opportunities.**

RECOMMENDATION: All students from both Centers should experience at least an extensive training period in which they learn about all of the support services within Weber State and throughout the Ogden and Davis communities for women, non-traditional students, student parents and those seeking support of any kind. This training could include presentations from the WSU Counseling Center on active listening skills and the resources available within the Counseling Center; program planning training (perhaps with existing staff, or someone from Student Involvement and Leadership); budget training (source of funds, how funds are used and how to work within a budget; perhaps fund-raising and/or grant writing); goal-setting; diversity training (in conjunction with the Diversity and Unity Center and/or the Multicultural Center); Safe Space training (with Erik Ashby); collaborations in student leadership, social justice, and program co-sponsorship; working within a feminist community (presented by someone in Women's Studies).

RECOMMENDATION: Building a thriving volunteer base can expand the capacity of the Center in its outreach and programming. Putting a volunteer application on the website can attract many strong students who want to make a difference.

RECOMMENDATION: A student development focus in training and supervising student employees and volunteers can enhance the experience for those who are actively engaged in doing the work of the Women's Center.

RECOMMENDATION: **The Women's Center should consider using the existing "Student Advisory Board" as a "Student Programming Board" and initiate major changes in creating a true "Advisory Board" consisting of faculty, staff, students and community stakeholders to advise and continuously evaluate the work of the Women's Center.**

Ethics and Legal Responsibilities

Excerpts from CAS Standards for WSPS: "Persons involved in the delivery of WSPS must adhere to the highest principles of ethical behavior. WSPS must review relevant professional standards and develop or adopt and implement appropriate statements of ethical practice. WSPS must publish these statements and ensure their periodic review by relevant constituencies" (p. 396).

Excerpts from CAS Standards for WSPS: "WSPS staff members must be knowledgeable about and responsive to laws and regulations that relate to their respective responsibilities, and that may pose legal obligations, limitations or ramifications for the institution as a whole" (p. 396).

Staff members of the Women's Center must use reasonable and informed practices to limit the exposure of the institution to liability. As such, staff should undergo training in federal laws such as FERPA, the Clery Act (the Campus Security Act), sexual harassment and discrimination, Title IX, and the rights and responsibilities associated with confidentiality.

Currently, the Women's Center offers training in FERPA for all professional and student staff members which is to be commended and confidentiality is fiercely protected by all.

The recommendation mentioned under "Leadership and Staffing" about the perception that "counseling" is taking place within the Women's Center, also has liability implications for the institution and should be addressed.

RECOMMENDATION: **Ensure that all employees have thorough knowledge of ethical and legal expectations.**

RECOMMENDATION: Develop a statement of ethics for how the Women's Center employees will conduct themselves and the work of the Center.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff members must limit the liability exposure of the institution.

Equity and Access

Excerpts from CAS Standards for WSPS: *"WSPS must be provided on a fair, equitable, and non-discriminatory basis. …WSPS must maintain an educational and work environment free from discrimination in accordance with law and institutional policy" (p. 397).*

Women's Centers and their staff have a long history of identifying and addressing issues of equity, access and social justice. The history of women's centers in the U.S. has been grounded in dismantling personal, institutional and societal systems of power and privilege. A constant assessment and campus scan must be a part of each Women's Center within higher education.

Stakeholders expressed some concerns that the needs of all students were not being met by the Women's Center and indeed that some students did not feel welcome there. This perception should be addressed directly and discussed often until there is a shift in perceptions and the students working at and participating in the programs of the Center represent the broad diversity of the campus.

RECOMMENDATION: **Assess the perception of the Women's Center being a "white, single-mom's Women's Center." If findings support this perception, develop an action plan to address this.**

RECOMMENDATION: Ensure that Women's Center staff members are knowledgeable of the different identity development processes of individual women and the complex intersection of ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation.

Diversity

Excerpts from CAS Standards for WSPS: "…WSPS must create and nurture environments that are welcoming to and bring together persons of diverse backgrounds…WSPS must promote environments that are characterized by open and continuous communication that deepens understanding of one's own identity, culture, and heritage, as well as that of others. WSPS must recognize, honor, educate and promote respect about commonalities and differences among people within their historical and cultural contexts" (pp. 397).

A perception existed among faculty and staff that the Women's Center was not particularly welcoming to students of color and/or to students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Whether or not this is true or intentional does not matter. That some feel that the Center's environment is not friendly to *any* particular students is problematic in all aspects of carrying out its services and programs.

There seems to be openness to reaching out to international students and if this happens it will enrich the lives of both the international students and the U.S. students alike.

Knowing that the presence of LDS students impacts many of the practices at Weber State, it is also important to note that religious diversity and spirituality are subjects rich in programming opportunities. As students develop and articulate personal belief systems and understand the values and practices of religions and spiritual practices that are different than their own, there can be greater acceptance among all students, faculty and staff at Weber State.

RECOMMENDATION: **Continue to assess the needs of students and the programs, services and support provided by the Women's Center. Especially important is finding out why students do not come to the Center and make a commitment to erasing barriers.**

RECOMMENDATION: Continue to align with partners in the Diversity and Unity Center and the Multicultural Center.

RECOMMENDATION: Address the perceptions highlighted in the Equity and Access section of this report.

RECOMMENDATION: Consider some programs with men as the primary audience. If Centers do not partner with men, they cannot create the change we hope to see in the world and on our campuses.

RECOMMENDATION: Consider development of a diversity action plan to address perceptions and create lasting change.

Campus and External Relations

Excerpts from CAS Standards for WSPS: "WSPS must reach out to relevant individuals, campus offices, and external agencies…to coordinate and collaborate, where appropriate, in offering programs and services to meet the needs of students and promote their achievement of student learning and development outcomes" (p. 397).

Women's Centers should maintain good working relationships with offices such as counseling, financial aid, clinical health services, health promotion services, career services, recreational sports, athletics, residential life, multicultural affairs, and public safety.[5] While the reviewers only met with a small subset of these university representatives, it is hoped that there are or will soon be strong relationships with ALL of these departments.

The Women's Center at Weber State University has developed outstanding relationships with social service and business agencies throughout the Ogden area. This is commendable and encouraged to continue with the understanding that campus relationships must be the Women's Center's first priority.

The amount of time spent on serving the needs of the community should be examined, particularly with the reality that the main funding source is student fees. One stakeholder estimated that in both time and financial resources, nearly 30% of those served were community members and not WSU students. Whether or not this is a correct perception, this should be addressed.

With 30 years of history on the Weber State campus, there should be a rich source of collaboration and financial support available through alumnae whose lives have been touched in a positive way by the Women's Center. Establishing channels of communication with alumnae and donors should be a possible direction for the future. Using women alumnae to present programs and to mentor current students is another way of reestablishing relationships with graduates of Weber State.

The relationship between the Women's Center and current faculty is essential for the development of a rich resource of program speakers, public relations, advisory board members and student referral. Feedback from faculty in Women's Studies in particularly is critical for the success of future partnerships. This support seems to be fragile and some of the following reasons were cited: 1) the Women's Center has not been perceived as feminist; 2) there is limited participation from the Women's Center on Women's Studies committees (and vice versa according to the Women's Center director); 3) there seems to be unwillingness to have conversations about what women may need (outside of scholarships); 4) women students would benefit from programs that help them effectively address educational barriers; and finally, 5) culturally sensitive and relevant groups and activities for Latinas and other under-represented/under-serviced groups would address the needs of an enormous number of students that are currently being missed.

Currently it seems that the "Student Advisory Board" consists of students who have been selected for scholarships or tuition stipends. There is only one faculty member. A presence of a diverse group of faculty, staff, students and community members can offer an "advising" function to the Director as well as help to expand and enact programs, conferences, initiatives and assessments that will make the Women's Center more visible and more accountable to the students and the administration of Weber State. A Chair or Co-Chairs should be selected from within the group and should not be a member of the Women's Center staff.

RECOMMENDATION: Promote community events related to women on the Women's Center website which can bring more visibility to what is happening in Ogden. Reciprocal advertising by these community agencies will draw more participants to Center events and programs.

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[5] CAS Professional Standards for Higher Education, Women Student Programs and Services, 2009, page 398.

RECOMMENDATION: Invite two or three members of the community to join the Advisory Board to assist with public relations, draw upon community perspectives, and enhance fund raising.

RECOMMENDATION: **Nurture the Center's relationship with the Non-Trad Center, Multicultural Center, Diversity and Unity Center, Counseling and Psychological Services Office and build a strong partnership with Women's Studies and other academic departments.**

RECOMMENDATION: Outreach to graduate women and networking opportunities for women across disciplines should be supported by the Women's Center.

RECOMMENDATION: **Examine what it might mean to be a feminist organization with a social justice and activist perspective. Push past any perceived limitations or barriers of "conservatism" to examine social change and what it means to prepare students to be citizens of our world. Allow students to lead this change.**

RECOMMENDATION: **Networking with Women's Centers across the country is an important step toward learning and growing.** Attendance at either the National Women's Studies Association Conference (especially the Women's Center Pre-Conference) or the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators Annual Conference are highly recommended in order to develop a broad perspective.

Financial Resources

Excerpts from CAS Standards for WSPS: "Funding priorities must be determined within the context of the stated mission, goals, objectives, and comprehensive analysis of the needs and capabilities of students, and the availability of internal or external resources" (p. 344).

The funding model at Weber State requires that the director, in essence, justify her employment and the Center's existence each year. This is common practice at all universities where Centers are funded by student fees. Maintaining relationships with student government and the student fees committee members is advised, as is including students in the decision making process. Additionally, ensuring that there is no duplication of services with other units on campus is highly recommended.

Without fully understanding the student staff model at Weber State, it is hard to make a recommendation about funding student positions, but it would seem to make sense to develop an hourly wage for 5-8 student staff members instead of offering tuition remission to a few. Having an open process for accepting applications for employment that is highly competitive and advertised widely could bring great dividends to the Women's Center and perhaps benefit more students from within the broad diversity of the student body.

The VP for Student Affairs indicated that the Women's Center budget is about $145,000 per year. While the reviewers did not look at the budget, we were able to ask some questions about use of the budget, scholarship allocations/selection of scholarship recipients, collaborations, and fundraising/grant writing.

Many Women's Centers nationally are looking for grant funds to supplement their university allocations, especially for start-up funds for special programs that are currently not budgeted (education about

violence against women; women's leadership; mentoring programs; off-campus programs or programs for non-students).

Budget matters for the Center must be addressed with a proper eye toward balancing capacity with growth. Securing grants, with limited time frames, that support new initiatives should not supplant the central functions of the Center supported by University resources. The University's commitment to the Center's success is in large part exemplified in the salaries and operating budget allocated to implement the goals of its Women's Center.

RECOMMENDATION: **It is important for the Women's Center to develop a supportive relationship with its student-funding sources.** The participation of students in the budgeting process provides an important life skill and gives direct evidence of the benefit of the Center to students.

RECOMMENDATION: **Examine current budget allocations for their alignment with expectations for the Center's operating, programs, and events.** When possible, increase operational allocations to the Center for use in raising awareness of its services and *expanding programmatic offerings* to include speakers and other events relevant to broad sectors of the university community.

RECOMMENDATION: Community involvement should be evaluated on the basis of time/money spent and best use of resources for WSU students.

RECOMMENDATION: Develop and implement a grant writing plan. Explore university resources available for assisting the Director in identifying on and off campus partners with whom to apply for federal and state funds that further the mission of the University particularly in the form of retention efforts aimed at women students. Provide the director with training opportunities in grant writing and offer her the necessary institutional support to insure the success of grant application and administration.

Facilities, Technology and Equipment

Excerpts from CAS Standards for WSPS: "Facilities, technology, and equipment must be evaluated regularly and be in compliance with relevant federal, state, provincial, and local requirements for access, health, safety, and security. Technology and equipment must be updated regularly. In addition, support for technology must be provided to WSPS" (p. 344).

The Weber State Women's Center was moved into new space two years ago. This shared space with the Non-Traditional Student Center consists of private offices for each full-time staff member, an office for the .5 FTE Secretary, and some shared space for practicum students and others who work in the Center.

The Non-Traditional Student Center also has private offices for its two full-time staff members and houses a drop-in child care center for up to 10 children at one time. A large, well-furnished computer lab is available for students utilizing both Centers. And a kitchen was available for use by all.

The only aspects of a *traditional* Women's Center that did not seem apparent were a comfortable lounge space for students to relax and network with each other and a library. Within the limited open space these may or may not be possible, however they could potentially make the space more welcoming for students to hang out.

Making sure that students feel comfortable in the space and that the artwork, bulletin boards and surroundings reflect the broad diversity that is Weber State University is an important opportunity for outreach to those groups who do not currently use the space.

An understanding of website management is a definite weakness among the Women's Center staff members, though they stated they were planning on learning how to keep up their website soon. There are good resources within Student Affairs and the Center will hopefully take advantage of all options available.

 The web site requires constant attention. Students, faculty and staff members access the web site for up-to-the moment information on Center services, events, and activities. Updating the site and keeping it fresh and accessible is a responsibility that is best accomplished when the website coordinator makes regular changes and tries new ways of reaching new audiences. Blogs, instant messaging with Women's Center staff, and other interactive web opportunities are all possibilities that might be explored. General information on the website can be made fresh by including historical facts or staff changes. Activities and events of interest to women should be listed as often as possible and updated frequently. Links to other on and off-campus women's initiatives can be a service the Center offers individuals who visit the website. Additionally, the Women's Center should be linked on the websites for Diversity and Unity Center, Multicultural Center, Office for Equity and Equal Opportunity (this website does include the Women's Center), Counseling and Psychological Services, Women's Studies and likewise, the Women's Center should have links to these and other offices and community resources.

Usage of other media (i.e., Facebook, blogs, Twitter, YouTube, video production, electronic newsletters) is essential as our students are more and more connected to information and to each other by electronic media.

RECOMMENDATION: **Conduct an environmental audit of the space that is used by participants at the Women's Center. Ensure that the space is accessible and identifiable as friendly to multicultural, queer, non-traditional students as well as students with disabilities.**

RECOMMENDATION: Conduct a review of all Center web-based materials and establish links to the Women's Center on other campus websites (and likewise, offer to link other campus partners on the Women's Center website).

RECOMMENDATION: Make the Center's web site interactive to reach the regional campuses/distance learners and answer questions for those who may not visit the Women's Center space. This can also be used for suggested program topics and ongoing feedback to the Center. The option to post "frequently asked questions" with their answers would also enhance the website information.

RECOMMENDATION: Ensure that computers and software do not become dated and keep this in the long-range plan for the Women's Center.

RECOMMENDATION: **Utilize staff development workshops offered by Student Affairs Technology to provide training for staff and students in regards to online development.**

Excerpts from CAS Standards for WSPS: "WSPS must establish systematic plans and processes to meet internal and external accountability expectations with regard to program as well as student learning and development outcomes…Assessments must include qualitative and quantitative methodologies as appropriate, to determine whether and to what degree the stated mission, goals, and student learning and development outcomes are being met…Data collected must include responses from students and other affected constituencies" (p. 399).

The process of planning for this review has been the beginning of an in depth assessment process for evaluating the effectiveness of the Women's Center. Benchmarking against other centers from peer institutions is an excellent assessment tool which should be done every 4-5 years. Continuous assessment would include a needs assessment, focus groups (particularly with those groups who do not currently utilize the Center), satisfaction surveys for users of the Center, continuous program evaluations, and measurement of learning outcomes (for student employees, volunteers, interns, and program participants).

As part of a larger strategic planning and priority setting process, it would be helpful to design a method by which to capture additional information regarding the perceptions of the Women's Center and the potential interest in the Women's Center from a variety of constituencies. Students will have their own set of needs and expectations for the Center that are distinct from the needs and expectations of staff and faculty members. Capturing information and designing outreach efforts aimed at addressing a specific need identified by a constituency may be the most efficient way to raise awareness of the Center and its services and programs. Using students who are studying assessment/statistics and who need internships would definitely enhance both their education and the needs of the Center.

Program evaluation and participation tracking are regularly conducted by the Women's Center staff. While tracking participation numbers is helpful in deciding which programs to repeat, there are few measures of learning taking place and no measurement of campus needs.

RECOMMENDATION: **Add this program review or the Executive Summary and future assessment initiatives to the website and make these widely available to stakeholders. Enlist the assistance of stakeholders in developing strategic initiatives for the Women's Center.**

RECOMMENDATION: A needs assessment survey should be undertaken by the staff at the Women's Center to determine perceptions of the Center and the needs of a wider constituency of students, staff and faculty. Focus groups can also be used to obtain more detailed feedback.

RECOMMENDATION: Conduct a comparative analysis of Weber State's Women's Center with peer institutions and with other institutions of similar size and scope to WSU (see list of Centers provided by reviewers).

RECOMMENDATION: **If these questions do not already exist on the program evaluations, add, "What one or two new things did you learn from this program?" and "How did you find out about this program?"**

RECOMMENDATION: **Learning outcomes should not only be assessed on a regular basis, but members of the staff should be able to talk clearly and decisively on the mission of the Center**, what they have learned from working at the Center and what participants can anticipate if they seek out the programs and support of the Center.

RECOMMENDATION: The staff at the Women's Center should keep track of success stories. While confidentiality should be maintained when an individual seeks support from the Center, a compilation of the types of needs met by the WC will be helpful in telling a story of successes and challenges later.

RECOMMENDATION: Utilize students who are in the Women's Studies program and looking for research opportunities to help with the Women's Center assessment goals.

Conclusion and Trends for the Future for Women's Centers

The Women's Center at Weber State University is uniquely situated to provide the university and its communities with significant support for women students. The strengths of the Center are its currently dedicated professional staff, the strong sense of commitment to the success of the Center on the part of students who have benefitted from their experiences there, and the current shared space that includes a computer center and drop in child care for student parents. A plan that includes a strategic direction for the programs and services of the Women's Center will enhance the Center's capability of supporting Weber State's mission of supporting a community in which learning, teaching, artistic expression, public service and research thrive "in an environment that encourages freedom of expression while valuing diversity."[6]

The over 400 Women's Centers located at universities and colleges in the U.S. are engaged in improving the climate for women students, staff, and faculty in US higher education. To this end, Women's Centers deliver programs and services each day with an eye toward the future and forecasting future trends.

The 2009 revised *CAS Standards and Guidelines* provide a framework by which all Women's Centers can measure their mission, program, student learning outcomes, leadership, organization and management, human resources, financial resources, facilities, technology and equipment, legal responsibilities, equity and access, campus and external relations, diversity, ethics, assessment and evaluation. These should be used by the Women's Center Advisory Board and the staff to work toward continuous improvement.

Some consensus exists that Centers will continue to help their institutions achieve their missions by addressing internationalization and connecting with issues that impact women globally. Preparing a workforce and advancing research that accounts for the unique experiences of women around the world acknowledges the interconnectivity of today's markets and economies.

Being a resource for institutions on the challenges women face in academic science and engineering fields is a key role for Women's Centers, women's studies programs, as well as multicultural programs. Women faculty and students continue to struggle to advance in science and engineering and women's

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[6] http://www.weber.edu/AboutWSU/WSUMission.html

centers can provide expertise and resources for examining institutional policies, practices, and reward systems that can better address the needs of women – and all – faculty and students in these highly competitive arenas.

Women's Centers are looking for ways to incorporate advanced technology into their own work and into the work of outreach to on and off campus partners, by developing the websites, distance education and outreach efforts, video-streaming, specialized programs and accessibility for people with disabilities, and ways to make library, database, and other resources available through the internet.

Women's Centers are examining ways to broaden their purview by partnering with academic areas to conduct research, providing undergraduate and advanced classes, creating internship and practicum opportunities for students, and supporting professional leadership opportunities for women administrators and faculty in the academy.

 Women's Centers are placing an emphasis on establishing programs that provide skill-building opportunities for women staff, students, and faculty with an emphasis on leadership development for women within the academy and beyond.

Collegiate athletics and the ways in which Women's Centers can partner with Athletic Department, individual teams, the NCAA, Booster clubs and alumni/ae are also the subject of future goals for all Women's Centers. In addition to helping their institution address the concerns that may arise related to the behavior of athletes and fans, Centers are working to help support the recruitment and retention of women athletes while promoting their success as student athletes.

Women's Centers are assisting their institutions in challenges related to access. Partnering with Admissions, Alumni/ae, and other recruiting networks, Women's Centers can help reach out to families of traditionally-aged students, *as well as* to the returning-student demographic. Women's Centers are helping their institution address issues of safety, campus climate for learning and living, leadership opportunities, available support, and how women can thrive and succeed at their particular campus.

A Women's Center can be a central participant in advancing an institution's goal to recruit and retain the best students, faculty, and staff. There are no limits on the ways in which a Women's Center can serve as a unique and highly developed partner for its home institution. Whether helping the campus respond to a crisis or participating in policy development aimed at retaining faculty members, the Women's Center can and should be a resource.

Weber State University should be proud to have such a long-standing and highly visible Women's Center. With student success at the forefront of WSU's agenda for the future, the Women's Center can be an active and very capable partner in taking Weber State to a new level of excellence in the 21st Century.

It is hoped that this Program Review process will inform and serve as a framework for future planning, development and indeed transformation with the help of many stakeholders who care deeply about the success of the Women's Center.

References

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