

**GLENDALE COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT
MULTICULTURAL & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
April 30, 2020 / 12:30pm-1:30pm
Virtual/Zoom**

The Multicultural & Community Engagement Committee Meeting was called to order 12:30 p.m. with Tzoler Oukayan chairing.

Present: Becka Cooling (Senate); Sarah Mecheneau (Guild); Rachel Ridgway (Joint Faculty); Nane Kakosian (CSEA); Patrik Namagardi (CSEA); Tina Andersen-Wahlberg (Administrator); Tzoler Oukayan (Administrator - Chair); Cobby Ascencio (ASGCC); David Crawford (non-voting)

Absent: Nancy Medina (Joint Faculty)

Guest: Anthony Garcia, Andre Manukyan

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – November 14, 2019

It was MSC (Tina Andersen-Wahlberg / Patrik Namagardi) that the minutes of November 14, 2019 be approved.

NEW BUSINESS

Foundation Grant

- **What can MCEC use** – Video cameras for office, several less expensive cameras for student workers to advertise programs
- **Laptops** – to use for presentations. We have one that is overused. We need one for Pride, DREAM and MCEC. MCEC laptop is old
- **Funding for different events/activities** - related to Latinx students and African American students. Work with Cultural Diversity Coordinator.

Virtual Graduation

- **Online Virtual Graduation** – small packets will be sent to students within the MCEC programs and areas graduating. Each student gets to send in a PowerPoint slide that they designed. Will add all together and share slides during virtual graduation.

Student Engagement Efforts

- MCEC is in the development stage of creating an Online-Service-learning Volunteering Database.

AB963 – Voter Empowerment

- **Civic Engagement Voter Empowerment Act** – Andre Manukyan gave a brief summary of new assembly bill, requiring campuses to engage students and staff to increase student voter participation. GCC is at the beginning stages of developing a plan as an institution and will submit the plan to The Secretary of State by December 1st, 2020. The Secretary of State will evaluate the plan by January 2021 and will let us know if its congruent with the Voter Empowerment Law.

UPDATES

MCEC

- SPARK Peer mentoring program is adjusting to transition virtually
- Recruiting 15 mentors for the 2020 Virtual SPARK Peer Mentoring Program
- Project-Explorer – A Job Shadowing Program in collaboration with Title-V and Career Center. Will try adjusting the program to go virtual.

DREAM Resource Center Report

1. **Immigration Updates in the Time of COVID-19:** Thursday, April 23rd. Attorney Jessica Viramontes from CARECEN provided legal updates on DACA, Public Charge, and Covid-19 testing.

Number of Attendees: 34

2. **Community Resources & Academic Info:** Tuesday, April 28th. Provided community resources that our friendly to the undocumented community and updating students on new academic polices due to COVID-19

Number of Attendees: 27

3. **Online ECAP Presentations:** 4 workshops, 120 perspective students attended.

4. **Undocu-Ally Training:** Friday, May 15th

5. **Teach-In Webinar:** Defending DACA- Wednesday May 27th

Projects & Resources

1. **Undocu-Success Scholarship:** 144 scholarships have been awarded (\$490k).

2. **Equity Emergency Fund:** Calling AB540 students to see how we can support them during this difficult time.

3. **AB540 Support Committee Fundraiser:** We are asking people who are financially able to donate to the GoFundMe page to provide scholarship to DREAMer students. Promoting the fundraiser on the GCC Twitter page and the GCC website.

4. **Immigration Clinics sponsored by CARECEN:** Free to Faculty, Staff, and students- Assistance renewing DACA, ways obtain a green card, and help with VISA applications.

Pride Center Updates

The following is a summary thus far of the Pride Center in conjunction with the Health Center:

Spring 2020 as of 4/29/2020

- Pride Center Open House: **36 participants**
- Welcome Day tabling: **????**
- Safe Zone Level 2 Training: **26 participants NEW EVENT!**
- 6 Let's Chat Series thus far: the consultant presents a topic relating to the LGBTQ+ community and leads a student discussion group. The consultant processes students' thoughts, feelings, and emotions while facilitating the group discussion: **62 participants**
- 2 Let's Chat Series that focused on the impact of the Coronavirus on Student Life: **22 participants NEW EVENT!**
- Suicide Awareness: **41 participants NEW EVENT!**
- Self-Care: **55 participants NEW EVENT!**
- How to Be an Upstander (stand up to sexual assault & violence) – **61 participants**
- Classroom presentations before the shelter-in-place order: **60 participants**
- Students have been zooming in/calling to talk about classes, majors, transfer, scholarships, mental health, and careers. The consultant has been having conversations about these topics with the students and referring them accordingly.
- Providing a virtual safe space for students to reveal challenges such as familial rejection, homelessness, harassment, and invalidating experiences with staff and other students. The consultant listened, validated, and provided referrals as necessary.

4/30/20— 06/05/20

- 4 more Let's Chat Series on each Thursday 'till the end of the semester
- Special Let's Chat to bring closure to the semester and remember self-care strategies over the summer.
- Identity Intersections in the U.S on May 7th (collaboration with International Student Office) **NEW EVENT!**
- Pride Week: May 11-May 15
- Prideful Conversations (the Let's Chat Series but with a different title and that includes students, staff, and faculty. Topic: Allyship on Campus) **NEW EVENT!**
- Safe Zone Level 1 Training on May 15th

The Pride Center continues to work on:

- Continuing outreach efforts to establish a listserv of students and staff that identify themselves as allies. With consent from staff, a list of LGBT-friendly staff is posted on Pride Center site.
- The consultant continues to collaborate with silos both on and off campus to create, promote, and plan for workshops and social gatherings for the spring semester.
- The consultant continues to lead weekly group meetings and leadership development training for Peer Educators (student workers) and oversees their tasks.

- The consultant trains Peer Educators to navigate conversations with audiences that might be resistant to learning about LGBTQ+ identities.
- The consultant talks to Peer Educators about practicing compassion and self-regulation when confronted with hate speech, homophobia, and transphobia.
- The consultant talks to Peer Educators about active listening, validating, and referring.
- Before we moved to a virtual platform, students who are LGBTQ+ felt safe in utilizing the Pride Center as a study space and as a place to meet like-minded others.
- The consultant is continuing to develop the Pride Center webpage for students seeking resources, LGBT-friendly colleges, scholarships, and more.
- Students continue coming to the Pride Center to talk about challenges that come along with an LGBTQ+ identity that include:
 - staff refusal to acknowledge preferred names and pronouns
 - harassment from other students regarding their gender expression and sexual identity
 - students report that some professors make condescending remarks such as “Back in my day, men were men and women were women” and “That’s an odd name for a guy.” Such remarks are discriminatory and damaging to students that identify as LGBTQ+ and create an unsafe environment.

NOTE:

- Classroom presentations where students are mandated to attend reveals a more misinformed audience. Students appear to inadvertently make transphobic and homophobic comments. Please see some of my past documentation below:
 - “Why do we need to learn about gays and transnys?”
 - “What if this is against my beliefs?”
 - In the fall, a staff member expressed to me, “Bisexual people need to just choose a team and stop being in denial about being gay.” I expressed that just as there are misconceptions about being gay, there are misconceptions about being bisexual. I further elaborated that bisexual people are not confused but rather can feel romantic and/or sexual attraction to more than one gender, typically towards males and females.
- Students who have been coming to the Pride Center have shared:
 - “I don’t want to have to come out each time I have to see a counselor”
 - “A counselor for LGBTQ+ students would understand the issues that queer students have...I wouldn’t have to explain myself to them.”
 - Professors making comments such as “I will not call you by any other name other than what’s on the roster.”
 - “I know that a counselor for LGBTQ+ students would be on my side and care about my future. They would get why it’s hard being gay.”

Please Note: Overwhelmingly, students have been talking about the stress of managing an LGBTQ+ identity in a home environment that is less than supportive, if not intolerant and verbally abusive of LGBTQ+ identities. For many of our students, connecting to the Pride Center serves as an opportunity

to connect with like-minded others who not only welcome but also celebrate their identities. The social distancing and shelter-in-place has profoundly impacted the mental well-being of our students, some of whom are afraid of being outed when connecting to the Pride Center from an online format. For instance, I call certain students at specific hours when their families are preoccupied, so that they can speak about their LGBTQ+ identity and the challenges that come along with it.

Students share that some teachers make condescending remarks such as, "That's a boy's name. Aren't you a girl?" and "Raise your hand like a normal guy." Further disturbing is that students report that when others bully them in the classroom, teachers do not address the incident for what it is, homophobia/transphobia, but will instead remark, "Quiet down" or "I need your attention." This is troubling because the teacher inadvertently perpetuates bullying. I believe that everyone on campus can benefit from attending Safe Zone Trainings.

Students also share that some counselors will "make weird faces" when they come into their offices to talk about classes. Furthermore, they share that they prefer the consistency of speaking to someone with whom they have a trusting relationship and who understands the challenges and complexity of an LGBTQ+ identity. However, given my role as a "consultant," I hear my students' concerns and we "talk about" classes, transfer, and mental well-being. Each and every time, I ensure to explain that my role at GCC is to not provide academic counseling and refer them accordingly.

Furthermore, some students who participate in the Let's Chat Series do so with no audio or video and only utilize the chat feature. This way they do not need to speak aloud about their LGBTQ+ related experiences. On a positive note, the anonymity features of Zoom have allowed students who would normally speak to me individually to participate in the group setting.

During my meetings with students we talk about:

- Thoughts, feelings, and emotions
- Classes (invalidating experiences in the classroom)
- Majors (Students are reluctant to stay enrolled in classes and are unable to perform to the best of their abilities when they come across invalidating experiences, bullying and ineffective responses from teachers).
- Transfer (Students are afraid to openly speak about their concerns of transferring to a 4-year that may not welcome their LGBTQ+ identity, provide adequate support, or an LGBTQ+ curriculum).
- Career (In many states, it is still legal to fire someone for being LGBTQ+)
- How to manage positive and negative comments from family/staff/peers
- How to self-regulate and self-care
- Acknowledge and accept where others are in their process
- Communication style
- Compassion training
- Self-acceptance.

I want to acknowledge the support of the Health Center without whom my continued participation at GCC could not have been possible. The Health Center has trusted me to lead various workshops surrounding LGBTQ+ identities as well as lead both group and individual meetings with students. My students and I are grateful.

I also want to voice my appreciation and respect for the many silos on campus such as the DRC, ASGCC, and MCEC for supporting and advocating for the Pride Center.

The following topics pertain to self-harm, suicidal ideation, and survivors of sexual assault and violence. As the consultant, I empathetically responded and allow students to share their experiences and refer accordingly. I have also informed the students that I cannot practice clinical counseling as that is beyond my title as a consultant. I further inform the health center which houses mental health counseling, as well as the GCC police department about these instances.

- Self-harm: students have shared cutting themselves with blades. They are bullied on campus and come from homes that do not understand and support their queer identities.
- Suicidal Ideation
- Symptoms of depression, anxiety, and shame are present among many of the students, especially among our Armenian, African-American, and Latino students from immigrant families.
 - “I can never come out to my family. I wish I weren’t gay.”
 - “I came out to my church friends and they said that God is punishing me...that’s why I feel this pain in my chest.”
 - “No one gets that you can’t be Armenian and lesbian. My dad would kill me. Other counselors don’t get that it would be the end of the world.”
 - “My teacher thinks that I’m playing dress up”
 - “My mom said that gay Armenians don’t exist and I can’t believe you’re here saying that you’re Armenian and gay and work here.”
 - “It’s hard because I’m supposed to be tough and being gay means you’re weak.”
 - “My dad said that I led him on and that it’s my fault he touched me.”
 - “He showed up at my house and 3 in the morning...he was surprised that I wasn’t flat-chested and that I had hips. He got mad at me. I wish I didn’t let him in the house.”
 - “I grew up catholic and I don’t want God to be mad at me.”
 - “It’s my fault for flirting with him. I got what I deserved.”
 - “These guys called me a fag and pushed me against the lockers.”
 - “My dad makes me cry and then he gets mad at me for crying.”
 - “Everyone in the class started laughing at me when I said that my name was _____. And the professor didn’t do anything either. He rolled his eyes and said, ‘whatever.’”
 - “I wanted to protect that tranny, but I didn’t know what to do. Can you do anything about that?”
 - “I’m afraid to use certain restrooms because I know I’m gonna get bullied in there.”

Students have also talked to me about topics pertaining to classes, career, major, and transfer. The consultant informs students that having such conversations are beyond his job description. He listens and refers them to academic advising and counseling on campus.

It is important to note the reasons as to why students approach the consultant to have these conversations:

- When students are met with invalidating remarks and gestures from other students and even teachers, they are hesitant to share these experiences with others due to fear of experiencing the harassment again.
- Often times, managing an LGBTQ+ identity means dealing with internal challenges (ex: self-hatred, low self-esteem, anxiety) and external challenges (ex: harassment, invalidation, exclusion from peers/family). These experiences impact their academic performance and as such, need personal counseling to meet academic and vocational goals.

- When students who are LGBTQ+ think about transferring, they don't only think about whether their new campus will have their preferred major and extracurriculars but also if will feel safe and welcomed on their new campus. They feel safe in talking about these things to the consultant.
- "I don't want to have to come out each time I have to see a counselor"
- "When I went to mental health services on campus, I saw a cross, and immediately shut down...I knew I couldn't talk about being gay."
- "A counselor for LGBTQ+ students would understand the issues that queer students have...I wouldn't have to explain myself to them."
- "I know that a counselor for LGBTQ+ students would be on my side and care about my future. They would get why it's hard being gay."
- "We need to have representation."

Moving forward,

As I have stated before, I believe that Safe Zone Training should be mandatory for all staff. Regardless of anyone's personal beliefs, we have a greater moral obligation (not to mention a legal obligation in California) to create a safe and supportive environment for students of all sexual and/or gender identities.

Students who are LGBTQ+ need academic counselors who are not only LGBTQ-friendly but also informed. Counselors who embody this description will understand the depth of the LGBTQ+ experience both on and off college campuses. Students who are LGBTQ+ are often met with invalidation from family, peers, and even from well-intentioned counselors. A counselor specifically designated for LGBTQ+ students would understand the cultural implications and subtleties that can make a huge difference in making students who are LGBTQ+ feel safe. Ultimately, counselors who are LGBTQ-friendly and informed will be equipped in supporting the holistic development of their students who are LGBTQ+.

Furthermore, representation is necessary, so that students who are LGBTQ+ can identify with their counselors and feel safe in disclosing the challenges they face. There are startling statistics that reveal that LGBT students are four times more likely than their cisgender counterparts to plan for suicide and three times more likely to attempt it. In my opinion, academic and personal counseling go hand-in-hand, especially for students who are underserved and often misunderstood. It is not enough to draft a Student Education Plan (SEP) when the student seated in front of the counselor is managing suicidal ideation and is feeling unsafe in revealing exactly what is troubling them: invalidating experiences, harassment, and lack of familial and community support.

NEXT MEETING:

Thursday, November 12, 2020

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned by Tzoler Oukayan at 1:25 pm

Minutes recorded by:

Nane Kakosian, Student Services Program Coordinator
Office of Multicultural & Community Engagement Center