Why a Women’s Center?

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Hypothesis

The awareness of the Office of Women's Program (OWP) is lacking among the student body due to limitations in funding and thus promotional work. These shortcomings are likely to affect the expansion of the Program and the creation of a Women's Center.
Importance

- Personal investment among group members for creating a Women’s Center
- Overall valuable for (female) student body
- Timing matches the OWP’s desire to expand their services.
Research Questions

Micro-level:

- What services are offered and what do they entail?
- How, and to what group of people are they targeted? (i.e. advertising, awareness campaigns, etc.)
- Where does funding come from?
- Staff, location and space issues. How does the UIUC student body feel about the Office of Women's Programs? Do they feel like there is a need for an expansion (creation of a Women's Center)
- Are there differences in awareness with regards to academic year or gender?

Macro-level:

- Compared to the Office of Women's Programs, how could a potential Women's Center affect the university and its student body?
- To what extent is the University an agent in the student’s body?
Research Plan

Achieves:
- Letters
- Official Office Women’s Program Documents

Interviews:
- Patricia Morey - Director
- Rachel Jackson Green – Social Work Intern
- Ross Wantland – Coordinator of Sexual Assault Education

Observations (both non-participatory):
- Lobby of Office of Women’s Programs
- Women’s Center Meeting

Surveys
- Two
  - Independent from each other
  - Short answers and multiple choice
  - Random population
Results

Archive Research

Letter to the Woman’s Caucus members
- Advocating support for the Equal Rights Amendment
- University Woman’s Caucus recognized on February 25, 1971
- Their main purpose specifically was the status of women at the University of Illinois.
Main Goals:
- Improve services provided by Campus Affairs units to women students.
- Resolve issues and help with the needs of woman.
- To conduct symposiums, develop programs, provide information and support to women and increase funding.
- Provide advising, problem solving and assistance.
- Stay locally and nationally aware of women’s affairs.

- Also establish a library and recourse materials of special interest to women.
- Locate outside funding.
- Provide advising, problem solving and assistance.
- Stay locally and nationally aware of women’s affairs.
- Establish awards for women.
- Also establish a library and recourse materials of special interest to women.
- Locate outside funding.
Results

Archive Research

A letter from the Secretary OWP (February 1976)

- Issues with inadequate staff and time
- Shared their secretarial staff with Veterans Affairs
- Specific detail about what is not being accomplished for the OWP
Results

Interview
Patricia Morey – Director OWP

- Office Location is bound to Dean of Students
- Funding: Student Fees, Illinois State Budget
- Work with: Women's Residence Halls, RSOs, Academic Units
- Lack in staff (only two full-time professionals) and funding
- Refer most students to Counseling Center

How could a Women's Center improve service:

- Space (for events and counseling)
- Provide a more safe, confidential space
- Be accessible, after 5:00 pm
- OBSTACLES: Central campus is occupied, Cost for a new building or renovations
Results

Interview

Rachel Jackson Green – Social Work Intern (OWP)

- What’s the main purpose of the OWP? What do they offer females on campus as well as the larger community?
  - Address gender inequity
  - Energy and efforts go to addressing sexual violence
  - Case management and advocacy for victims
  - Retain students on campus
    - victims of sexual assault
  - $30,000 worth of scholarships to women per year
  - Co-sponsor multiple programs and events
  - Programming fund for speakers
R. Jackson Green continued:

- Are there programs that could be offered that aren’t, and, why aren’t they offered?
  - Limited resources in terms of space and staff
    - Borrow space from other cultural units, or rent space
  - No central meeting space for women
  - No multipurpose room
  - Lack of events and programs
  - Gallery space for women’s history month
  - Sexual assault awareness month
  - Domestic violence awareness month
  - Open mic nights
Results

R. Wantland:

- *In the months since working toward expansion of the OWP into a women’s center, what has been your biggest obstacle?*

  - People think Sexism is dead
  - Gender inequity is a thing of the past
  - College is one of the most gender equitable spaces
    - But a lot of gender inequity happens on this campus
  - Gender based violence gets seen as an individual act rather than the ways it acts as a system.
    - Impacts women at large and how it can be impacted by a climate.
      - Climate can support that violence and allow it to continue.
R. Wantland continued:

- In your opinion, who has agency over the body? In other words, is it the university’s responsibility to provide promotion and use of services or is it the individual’s responsibility to seek out the services?

- It’s dual
- Accessibility is making connections
- Must be hands on
- Trust
- Largely the university’s responsibility
Results

Observation:

Lobby of Office of Women’s Programs

- Office is centrally located and accessible
- Structure of the office, appeared to influence the topics discussed
- A maze of desks of the hodge-podge services offered
- Overall atmosphere somewhat stiff, quiet, and hesitant.
- Several brochures on crisis counseling, but none specifically published by the OWP
- No physical space to host large student or support groups
- No one in the office acknowledged my presence
  - How would a student with an issue go about speaking to a professional that works at the OWP?
Results

Observation: 

**Women’s Center Meeting**

- A group of university students attempting to solve the need for a Women’s Center.
- Observations were based off of reactions, facial expressions, and tone of voice as compared to minor details.
- Two themes:
  - The first theme was the importance of role playing by the members in the room.
  - The second theme was the effect verbal participation had on the nature of the interactions, the meeting’s course, and the overall atmosphere in the conference room.
- A total of nineteen members were in attendance (14 females and 5 males).
- Bodies were positioned in such a way that they could face and see one end of the table were the ‘group leaders’ sat.
- Turning point/misunderstanding
- Workload delegation
- My presence was not questioned and I felt as if I was a member of the Women’s Center group.
## Results

### Survey Participant Awareness of the Woman's Center

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>Totals</th>
<th>Ave % Aware</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statistic</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>% Aware</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>% Aware</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grad</td>
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<td>66.7%</td>
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<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Undergrad</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>0%</td>
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</table>

Average age of participant 22 years old

### Participants in favor of Woman Center Expansion

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Gender</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>M</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grad</td>
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<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergrad</td>
<td>92.9%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
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Results

Age Distribution of Surveyees

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<th>Proportion</th>
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<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.25</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.10</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>0.15</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.15</td>
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<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>0.10</td>
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<td>Results</td>
<td>Number of Students, $n=15$</td>
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<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td><strong>Housing</strong></td>
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<td>Dorms</td>
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<td>Sophomore</td>
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<td><strong>Major</strong></td>
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<td>Decided</td>
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<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
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<td><strong>Have heard of the Office for Women's Programs.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Have attended an event/class/speech.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Counseling Services offered by the UIUC.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Have heard of but can not remember name</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have heard of and know details</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Have consulted counseling service.</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>No</td>
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<td><strong>See a necessity for a Women's Center.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Analysis

- Research supports main hypothesis
  - OWP Staff validate
  - Evidence confirms

- Undergraduate and graduate students support expansion

- Problems arose historically and persist currently
  - Awareness
  - Adequate space
  - Resources
  - Staff
Significant Findings

- A lack of physical space, personnel, programming, and resources exists at the Office of Women’s Programs.
- The current location of the OWP is accessible, but the problem of space lies within.
- The OWP has no control of the environment in which it inhabits.
- Distribution of power and responsibility among University student advocates for a Women’s Center is unstable and vague, requiring direction.
- The Office of Women’s programs is the campus unit responsible for improving the campus life for women.
Conclusion

- The incentives of such a place in campus culture are innumerable.
- A Women's Center epitomizes the University's attempted initiative for inclusively by recognizing the complex identities of university students.
- It creates an opportunity to build a platform for a debate among the men, women, and transgender communities, heightening the recognition of sex as a cultural marker.
Encountered Obstacles

- Archive Box missing with yearly summary reports
- Sample size too small
Recommendations

- Expand funding to the Office of Women’s Programs
- Provide funding for promotion and advocacy
- Provide larger space
- Create more awareness
- Expand services through a women’s center
- The registered student organization continue to work towards goals for the establishment of a Women’s Center
Future Research

- Become a participant and establish relationships; not just an unobtrusive observer (*In the Field: Participating, Observing, and Jotting Notes* handout)
- Attend more events and meetings of the student organization and OWP
- Obtain personal accounts from students who utilize OWP services
- Analyze Feminist social/historical context and how it effected the development of the OWP
- Answer such questions as how should funding be obtained? How should the OWP promote its cause? How does one increase awareness on campus?
- Center research along the lines of the overall progression and evolution of the OWP
EOTU Initiative

- Affects campus community
- Relatively new research topic
- Future research can expand on our findings
- Might be useful for the expansion process (Women’s Center)
Any questions or comments?