

**Queer Resource Center  
Claremont Colleges  
External Review Report  
Fall 2015**

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**Executive Summary**

Higher Education is at a critical turning point in supporting various marginalized populations. As we write this review, the national landscape regarding diversity issues in American colleges and universities has intensified, with protests calling for intentional and real change to better serve underrepresented people in our institutions of higher learning. It is important to note that while the review of the Queer Resource Center (QRC) at the Claremont Colleges took place before the events at the University of Missouri and Claremont McKenna College, this work does not happen in a vacuum. People who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer/questioning or otherwise marginalized by sexual orientation (LGBQ+) or who identify as transgender, gender non-conforming or who experience marginalization around gender identity (TGNC) are underrepresented and marginalized students, and with their own intersectional identities, are at the center of those calling for change broadly.

Such a moment seems fitting for our recommendations to facilitate proactive institutional strategies to support diverse and intersectional communities. This document captures the major highlights, challenges, and opportunities the review team gathered from two full days in October 2015 spent engaging with the Claremont Colleges community. The review team is grateful for all those who took their time to share their experiences with the QRC during the visit and the communication channels established for this purpose. It is clear that the QRC is valued across the Claremont Colleges and given its historical trajectory may be at a turning point of its own. The goal of this review is to offer some perspective on the first five years of the QRC's existence as a campus department serving the, Claremont Colleges, five undergraduate colleges and two graduate universities, and provide recommendations to guide the strategic planning process for the next five years.

The following six objectives guided the External Review Team's assessment strategy and analysis:

- Review QRC programming and services to assess if the mission of the QRC is being achieved.
- Assess if the naming of the center and if the name best represents the work of the center and the communities served.
- Assess the need for a QRC Advisory Committee or Steering Committee.
- Review the QRC professional staffing model and provide staffing suggestions for the next five years.

- Identify how the communities at the colleges perceive the QRC's structural position within the Claremont Colleges.
- Help to develop goals to build the QRC strategic plan for the next five years.

The review team gathered ample data and discussion over the review period and posited the following summary of highlights, challenges and recommendations to guide the QRC's short and long-term strategic planning processes.

### **Highlights**

- The QRC is valued for the varied programs and services provided to students, staff and faculty at the 7C's. Three major themes emerged in the conversations as key contributors to the QRC's success: the welcoming space, accessible campus-wide trainings, and student-centered programming.
- The QRC's mission, rooted in social justice and anti-oppression work, frames identity as complex and sets a high bar for operationalizing this mission in who and how constituencies are served.
- The lack of an advisory committee currently allows the QRC to be flexible to meet the needs of the changing campus landscape.
- The reviewers, some students, faculty, and staff found the name of the QRC to be very progressive on the national landscape of center naming options.
- The lead college model is effective in providing institutional access for the QRC while ensuring 7C centered focus of its programs.

### **Challenges**

- Striking a balance of support and advocacy while still maintaining a social justice framework, while incorporating the various needs and levels of comfort between each 7C student body and culture. The lack of adequate resources and support to meet the large area of work and impact poses a challenge.
- Given the distinct cultures of each college, several students and staff spoke to how students from some campuses feel more or less welcome due to the standard of activism that was experienced within the space.
- One major obstacle in achieving the mission of supporting all seven campuses is the perceived distance of the Center and connectedness to the lead campus, Pomona College.
- Conversely, other students, staff and faculty struggled with the connotation of the term "Queer" in the name of the QRC. Some perceived it as "activist-y", radical, theory-driven, White and Euro/Anglo-centric. Stemming from Queer Theory, some campus

members felt a sense of distance to the term as “too academic” or not reflective of the various communities encompassed under this umbrella.

- The history and culture of the QRC has an impact on what kinds of students pursue employment at the QRC.

### **Recommendations**

- Develop a volunteer program and establish a more structured relationship with the LGBTQ+ and TGNC student organizations on the 7C’s to broaden the range of students who can be directly involved with the QRC and its work. It is suggested to limit the role of this team to a very specific purpose, as to not overwhelm the professional staff with supervisory duties.
- Formalize and articulate intentional structural policies and practices to ensure that the practice of hiring undergraduate and graduate students from all 7C’s is a formal policy, not an informal one.
- Establish consistent and permanent funding to develop a third full-time staff member who can continue campus-specific trainings, outreach events and student support programs.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive, learning outcomes-driven assessment and evaluation plan as part of the strategic plan to codify intentional steps to achieve institutional, community, and student-centered outcomes.
- Plan more QRC programming and outreach at Tranquada Student Services because it is seen as more centralized and accessible.
- Provide an intentional mediation space with external, third party mediators to address concerns from QTPOC students and foster healing and healthy conflict mediation strategies.
- Given the lack of any overwhelming support for a specific name, we recommend the QRC conduct a follow-up study to better assess future directions for naming the Center.
- Increase alumni engagement from both the QRC and the Claremont Colleges development office(s).



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- Review the QRC Professional Staffing model and provide staffing suggestions for the next five years.
- Identify how the communities at the colleges perceive the QRC's structural position within the Claremont Colleges.
- Help to develop goals to build the QRC strategic plan for the next five years.

The review team gathered ample data and discussion over the review period. This document lays out the six objectives followed by findings that highlight the effectiveness of the QRC, articulates major challenges that emerged and posits various opportunities and recommendations to enhance support and climate for LGBTQ+ and TGNC people across the seven colleges. Throughout this document, we intentionally use LGBTQ+ and TGNC as an opportunity to be inclusive of the many identities within our community, and distinguish between sexual orientation and gender identity.

## **1. Review QRC programming and services to assess if the mission of the QRC is being achieved**

### **Highlights**

The QRC is clearly valued across the Claremont Colleges for the varied programs and services provided to students, staff and faculty at the various colleges. Three major themes emerged in the conversations as key contributors to the QRC's success: the welcoming space, accessible campus-wide trainings and student-centered programming.

Students, faculty and staff expressed the importance of the QRC's colorful décor and warm and homey atmosphere as a critical component of its effectiveness. "It's not clinical and feels authentic for me" said one student. Students spoke about the multiple entrances, beanbags, and open feel of the QRC as reasons why they enter the space. Even when there is conflict, the space is seen as welcoming and accessible to many campus entities. The QRC's mission, rooted in social justice and anti-oppression work, frames identity as complex and sets a high bar for operationalizing this mission in who and how constituencies are served.

Several individuals spoke about utilizing the QRC as a resource for themselves or to support others on campus. Specifically, the ally trainings conducted by QRC staff were cited by most staff and faculty as thought-provoking, intentional and accessible to various levels of awareness, especially for heterosexual and cisgender people. They credited the trainings and the QRC staff for prompting inclusive policies supporting LGBTQ+ and TGNC people in each of the colleges and providing relevant skills and strategies for enhancing inclusion in every-day practice. Several individuals from other cultural centers also noted the importance of such training on campus-wide conversations of intersectionality and complexity of identities.

Further, campus stakeholders consistently felt the QRC programming and leadership are dynamic. Students appreciated the intentional programs, often developed and led by student staff along with student organizations and campus departments. Gaypril was highlighted as a vibrant and extensive series of events that touches many of the campuses by extending programming outside of the QRC. Many participants spoke about the QRC's collaborations with other cultural centers and various departments as avenues to explore intersectional identities and complex experiences. Partnerships with academic departments and faculty were highlighted as a model for 7C collaborative partnerships and supporting the academic-student

affairs connection. Several faculty spoke about presenting their work at the QRC or partnering to bring various speakers to campus.

LGBQ+ and TGNC staff and faculty also appreciated periodic social gathering as a way to connect with colleagues across the 7C's. One major highlight was the Director's office hours at each campus, seen as an innovative approach to meet students where they are and increase the QRC's footprint in the heart of each 7C campus. Several staff spoke about plans to replicate this model to serve their specific populations at the various campuses.

## **Challenges**

The QRC's mission aims to serve students, faculty, and staff, yet several themes were identified as challenges to meeting this objective: Striking a balance of support and advocacy while still maintaining a social justice framework; various needs and level of comfort between each college student body and culture; and lack of staff and resources to meet the large area of work and impact.

A strong history of student activism in the founding of the QRC and the current model of institutional support and stability with funding was appreciated by various constituents, yet also highlighted some tension, especially with students, as to the purpose and mission of the QRC. In a Critical Race Theory framework, the importance of such centers on campus as "counterspaces" to the dominant perspectives contributes to student identity development and sense of belonging (Solorzano, Ceja & Yasso, 2000). There were mixed perceptions as to the degree that the QRC is primarily by and for students (its historical foundation and trajectory) or a campus department led by trained student affairs professionals (its current institutionalized incarnation). Several students expressed that the "Center is about Queer folks and not about allies which is a good thing." While others expressed a feeling of not being personally "activist-y enough" to utilize the space. Faculty and staff overwhelmingly saw the QRC as a critical resource for students and noted they do not see its purpose as a personal support area for staff and faculty, beyond the professional interactions provided through ally trainings, consulting, programming partnerships, etc.

Given the distinct cultures of each college, several students and staff discussed how students from some campuses feel, to varying degrees, that their presence or participation is welcome in the Center space and operations, given the standard of activism that was experienced and expected within the space. Students also explained that the Center's attempts to reach beyond its physical space are experienced in multiple ways, as well. One student stated, "[They] don't do a good enough job reaching out to some of the colleges. There is a sense of paternalism with student groups." Most of this concept was connected to student organizations and the student-led programming model of the QRC. Some people did not distinguish between the QRC and student organizations, seeing them as one entity; while others saw them as multiple separate bodies.

One major obstacle in achieving the mission of supporting all seven campuses is the perceived distance of the Center based on its physical location and emotional distancing influenced by connectedness to Pomona College through the lead campus model. Several constituency groups spoke about how far the QRC was from their campus and how that was a significant barrier to accessing their services and attending programs. Simultaneously, several people commented on the lead campus model of having the QRC on the Pomona campus and how this partially contributes to non-Pomona students' perceptions of inaccessibility. The recent changing of the QRC's website to [colleges.claremont.edu/qrc](http://colleges.claremont.edu/qrc) is a great step forward in breaking down these barriers to access by reflecting the QRC's role as a 7C resource.

Programming from the QRC is mainly driven by the student staff; such a responsibility is welcomed by students for empowering student-driven programming, but may also cause stress for students who feel they have to represent the various identities within the community without wanting to speak for a whole group, especially when students don't share that specific identity. Further, having individual student identities dictate a resource center's programming is problematic and places undue pressure on student staff, while also limiting programming to whatever identities student staff hold at that time/that semester. Adjusting the structure so that professional staff take a more active role in shaping programming and educating students on programming across identities would mitigate some of this stress while also helping students direct their energies in support of consistent programming from the QRC. This shift would align programming with the strategic goal of positioning the QRC as a 7C campus resource and not a student organization. However, the reviewers perceive the difficulty in implementing this necessary strategy. As the earlier section illustrates, the tension between the historical framework of the Center as a student-run space and its current positioning as a professionally-run department could result in tension if students resist the shift to professionals being more involved in the programming process. In addition, the external reviewers noted a missed opportunity in the lack of a learning outcomes-driven model of assessment and evaluation. Participation and satisfaction are not accurate measures of learning, support of student development, or the development of allies. The Center, going forward, needs a well-thought out assessment and evaluation plan that can help the Center speak to its strengths, communicate its (and the staff's) specific contributions to the learning and cultural milieu of the Claremont Colleges, and offer on-going areas of improvement and growth.

Finally, the reviewers heard the concern and frustration expressed by a number of Trans and Gender Non-conforming students, particularly those who identified as Queer and Trans People of Color (QTPOC), about some of the tensions between the Center, its Director, and the students themselves. These concerns ranged from the interpersonal to the programming model and perceived lack of inclusion (or "add-on" feel) to the broader question of who the Center caters to. In addition, some of the tension arose from the professionalization of the space.

## **Opportunities and Recommendations**

Considering the highlights and challenges with achieving the mission of the QRC, we offer several strategic opportunities for guiding its future direction. As noted above, the perception of distance and location of the QRC on Pomona's campus provides a great opportunity to engage in some intentional work to educate the campus about this Center's broad mission and effectiveness in meeting the needs of various constituency groups. Several comments questioned if the lead campus or CUC model would be best for the future of the QRC. The central location and visibility of the Tranquada Student Services Center made it seem more accessible and as serving all campuses. Though this visibility is important, moving to a CUC reporting structure is not recommended, given the history of the QRC and its effectiveness in the current model. A more intentional attempt to increase collaborative programs with other centers and LGBTQ+ and TGNC student organizations and being physically present on each campus would mitigate issues of access. Building on the QRC's office hours at each campus, actual physical space on each campus along with additional staff so that only two professional staff in the QRC are not solely responsible for the complex needs of each campus would be beneficial and effective in providing adequate support to each campus.

Building on the success of ally trainings, one major suggestion was to increase the frequency of open ally trainings, beyond presenting to student leaders or specific groups, to enhance awareness of LGBTQ+ and TGNC identities and ally-ship skills. To reach the broadest population possible, it is suggested to provide trainings that delve deeper into understanding LGBTQ+ and TGNC communities, and build basic competency in addressing LGBTQ+ and TGNC issues. Doing so would enhance the already impacting curriculum. In addition, there is a desire for "advanced ally trainings." Given the time commitment this would require, we recommend additional graduate student funding or professional staff funding to lead these trainings. Such an investment would greatly impact campus climate in a positive way both at the Consortium level and addressing specific needs of each campus. This would truly be an exemplary model for many other institutions engaging in this work. Exploring this and other opportunities would benefit the QRC and communities at all the 7C's. Enhanced support from the 7C's for the QRC and the LGBTQ+ and TGNC communities through programming, staff structure and institutional presence will foster a more inclusive climate and holistic fulfillment of the mission.

Further, developing and implementing a comprehensive assessment plan for the QRC will be critical in aligning programming and outreach initiatives with community needs, while demonstrating the impact of the QRC across the various campuses. A clearer assessment program would benefit the QRC by demonstrating effectiveness of the strategic plan through demonstrative data and can further support requests for additional resources as the LGBTQ+ and TGNC communities continue to get more complex and require additional resources.

Finally, to address student concerns, especially by QTPOC students, regarding interactions between the Center’s Director, student staff and students across campus we recommend intentional mediation with external, third party mediators to provide a space for acknowledgement and healing. Holding a mediation space as part the strategic planning process would benefit students, Center staff, and the broader campus community by fostering and modeling conflict resolution in healthy and productive ways.

**2. Assess if the naming of the center and if the name best represents the work of the center and the communities served**

### **Highlights**

The Queer Resource Center’s name was discussed at length in various spaces throughout the Review. The Reviewers found the existing terminology to be very progressive on the national landscape of center naming options. Many centers in the nation are exploring ways to add the term “queer” to existing lists of identities or adopting “gender and sexuality”-like language. Another naming convention is to identify a historical-institutional connection to the moment and name the campus center in honor of that person or people. Many campuses have struggled, and continue to grapple with finding the right name, and particularly with the inclusion of “Queer,” especially with alumni and upper level administration that may be uncomfortable with the term. It is both a highlight and a challenge.

### **Challenges**

Given the complex nature and history of the word, it is not surprising that there was no consensus across the 7C’s on a potential name change. “Queer” as a name was a very important term of identity, especially for student staff who felt the name was personally reflective, and an important aspect of their involvement in the QRC. Several people spoke to the empowerment provided by this term in their own developmental process and a space to connect with similarly identified people. They also connected to the historical roots of this name for the Center and why it is important to sustain.

Conversely, others (including students, staff and faculty) struggled with the connotation of this term as “activist-y”, radical, theory driven, white and Euro/Anglo-centric. Stemming from Queer Theory, some campus members felt a sense of distance to the term as ‘too academic’ or not reflective of the various communities encompassed under this umbrella. Some constituents felt the term politicized identity in complex and uncomfortable ways. It is not surprising that the term is complicated by generational, ideological and historical differences and the impact of intersectional identities.

## **Opportunities and Recommendations**

Given the various cultural differences even among the 7C's, the current name was an access point for some and a barrier for others. Regardless of what is decided as the name for the Center, the QRC needs to explain the history, rationale and meaning of the name through multiple modes (e.g., through in-person contacts, through orientation and channels of campus introduction and enculturation, through online and social media messaging, etc) on a frequent and ongoing basis. The more clarity and consistent reinforcement that can be provided about the name and how it came to be will serve to educate the community and empower student leaders.

### **3. Assess the need for a QRC Advisory Committee or Steering Committee Highlights**

#### **Highlights**

Advisory or Steering Committees can contribute to the effectiveness of centers when they provide high level leadership, strategic visioning, or leverage the community's voice and authority in overcoming institutional obstacles; they become less effective when they attempt direct influence of specific operational or programmatic details. The current lack of an advisory or steering committee for the QRC provides flexibility to staff and student interns to adapt to campus needs by modifying programming and services as needed. A major strength of the QRC is its relationships with various campus colleagues who provide feedback and support as needed by the Center's leadership. In discussions with other Centers on campus that had similar governing bodies, the purview, legitimacy and impact of those advisory groups was questionable.

#### **Challenges**

Advisory boards must be intentionally built with a specific purpose and clearly defined roles. It does not seem beneficial to establish such an entity at this point. Given the lead-campus model and the strong relationships and channels of communication that QRC maintains with deans and student organizations from each campus, the benefits gained through the development of a new committee do not outweigh the costs of logistical coordination and support at this time in the Center's lifespan. Given the shifts in programming models and fairly new staff, constituting and incorporating such an entity into the current structure would greatly impact professional and student interns' ability to provide essential services and programs for the 7C's.

## **Opportunities and Recommendations**

As the Center's work progresses and other recommendations from this review are implemented, developing an advisory committee is a commendable aspiration and would

better support the Center's work. This committee would primarily serve in an advisory capacity in supporting the Director and potentially support fundraising and alumni-centered programming in the future. Developing such boards require immense amounts of time, energy and support, which currently would be better directed to provide student services and strengthening cross-campus visibility and partnerships.

<p><b>4. Review the QRC professional staffing model and provide staffing suggestions for the next five years</b></p>
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### **Highlights**

It was clear to the review team that the QRC's professional staff has a strongly felt presence with both faculty and staff. A large number of staff from across the 7C's participated in the review process and shared their experiences with the Director, Program Coordinator, and the QRC programs and services. From those interviews, it became clear that the Director is a valued colleague and seen as an expert, both locally and nationally. The Director and Program Coordinator's approach to trainings and learning opportunities were widely seen as developmental and authentic. Participants felt like they could be open with their gaps in knowledge in a way that was productive and helpful. Like many centers across the country, the QRC relies on student staff, at both the graduate and undergraduate levels, to run the space and contribute to the many programs the Claremont Colleges rely on. Student staff is fundamental to the QRC's mission and, in addition to professional staff, has an impact on how the space is perceived. The Review Team identified staffing challenges, opportunities, and considerations for the QRC to take into account as it moves into the next five years.

### **Challenges**

The professional demands of serving the 7C's, with their distinctiveness, was a point shared many times over. Serving the different campuses can be physically demanding, despite attempts by the Director to hold office hours on all 7 campuses. Two professional staff members at times seems adequate for the number of students serving, yet the demands of the uniqueness of the Claremont Colleges adds responsibilities to the job that are not found at traditional colleges and universities. The toll on both the Director and Program Coordinator was felt by the review team.

Throughout the two days it was clear that the campus community, at every level, had a hard time differentiating between the QRC and the Director. There were many times when they were considered one and the same. While this speaks to the presence the Director has on campus and the way she has been able to integrate herself and the QRC at the Claremont Colleges, this blurring of the lines presents some challenges. With the transition of the Director to Interim Associate Dean in a prior semester, the QRC was impacted in several ways:

- The move was seen by some as positioning the QRC closer to central activities of the institution. As one staff person noted, “the net impact of her (the Director) as Interim (Assoc. Dean) is that the QRC drew closer to the center of the business of the college.”
- The perception of some students was that the Director (and the QRC) was “selling out to the man” by students.
- In the absence of the Director, the Program Coordinator took on more responsibility that required considerably more time and was not compensated for the shift in role or the additional duties.

The move of a center Director could provide essential contributions to central administration, even for a short amount of time, can have long term positive change on the QRC. Greater communication needs to happen with student cohorts of center staff and users on how to leverage this change and how the QRC and subsequently LGBTQ+ and TGNC students can benefit from the move.

The QRC’s location can seem limiting in distance and openness to students that do not attend Pomona. In addition to the perceptions of physical and emotional accessibility, the history and culture of the QRC has an impact on what kinds of students pursue employment at the QRC. There was tension around “professionalizing” the space and how students make meaning of this shift from a student-run space to a departmentally run space. A quote from an upper administrator captures the shifting dynamic, “the QRC is also an institutional space, not a student space, and so that differentiation also makes it more complex as we unpack the employment connections and expectations, the leadership implications, etc. Expectations are different in institutionally programmatic offerings versus student developed initiatives.” The difference in expectations were clear when talking to student staff and students who use the space.

## **Opportunities**

With the above quote from the administrator in mind, having student representation from across all 7C’s is a productive way to reach a broad base of students and ensure that the center is not reflecting only the culture of its lead college, Pomona College. The practice of hiring at least one undergraduate student from each 7C and one graduate student from each graduate university should be continued, with intentional structural policies situated to ensure that the practice of 7C hiring is a formal policy, not an informal one. The review team suggests solidifying financial commitments from all 7C’s that are reoccurring; ensuring that each campus is contributing to the success of the QRC.

The effort being made to make the QRC more present on each campus was highlighted as a positive practice. Staff and faculty appreciated being able to refer students to the Director’s office hours on each campus. This is one area that could help build capacity. Expanding the non-QRC office hours practice to both the Program Coordinator, and student

staff could expand the reach of the QRC's mission and vision. Campuses can access a broader representation of the QRC staff, the sole responsibility of representing the QRC would not fall on the Director, and each campus could benefit from the additional queer presence. Doing this may require more people power, and if funding doesn't allow, one suggestion would be to think about creating an "ambassador" or "street team" that serve as liaisons between the QRC and the 7Cs. The all-volunteer program would be coordinated through QRC staff but would be responsible for creating pop-up QRC sponsored spaces across the 7C's. This team could serve as another form of communication and marketing for each campus. In addition to growing the number of students directly involved with the QRC, the volunteer program could build capacity with an intentional focus and connection to each individual campus and bridge the divide between students and staff of the QRC.

### **Recommendations**

- Establish consistent and permanent funding to develop a third full-time staff member who can continue campus-specific trainings, outreach events and student support programs. The third full-time staff person would compare to the number of professional staff at the Office of Black Student Affairs, Chicano Latino Student Affairs, and International Place.
- Increased/equitable pay for the Program Coordinator to compensate for additional work responsibilities during the Director's Interim Associate Dean appointment.
- Intentional structural policies in place to ensure that the practice of hiring at least one undergraduate and graduate students from all 7C's is a formal policy, not an informal one, with reoccurring funding from each campus.
- Develop a volunteer program and establish a more structured relationship with the LGBTQ+ and TGNC student organizations on the 7C's to broaden the amount of students who can be directly involved with the QRC and its work. It's suggested to limit the role of this team to a very specific purpose, as not to overwhelm the professional staff with supervisory duties.

<p><b>5. Identify how the communities at the colleges perceive the QRC's structural position within the Claremont Colleges</b></p>
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### **Highlights**

The model of the QRC was discussed thoroughly, and it is no surprise to those at the Claremont Colleges that the structure presents some challenges. Despite those challenges, the QRC lead-college model is considered a success, so much so that it is used as a potential benchmark in the development of other programs and services at the Claremont Colleges. Colleagues from the other Claremont Colleges cultural centers expressed support of the QRC in

the lead college model. The lead college model offers institutional access to Pomona College resources and systems. It was mentioned that the Board of Trustees for Pomona College endorsed the need for intentionality of serving LGBTQ+ and TGNC students, indicating that LGBTQ+ and TGNC issues are on the radar of institutional priority setters at Pomona College, however, LGBTQ+ and TGNC students were mentioned in very few places of the Pomona College Diversity Plan. There was not a clearly articulated plan on how to address institutional changes that will impact LGBTQ+ and TGNC students.

### **Challenges**

While it is important to highlight the ways the lead college model is proving successful, the conversations about lead college model and the CUC model illustrated the challenges with both. One major challenge of the lead college model was the distinct cultural differences between the different campuses. Serving seven different campuses requires heightened flexibility of QRC staff, and the navigation of the shifting politics and cultures can be taxing on professional staff. When asked about the intentionality of institutional structure (CUC vs. LCM), limited resources was a reoccurring theme. When pressed about which model is better, one person shared “whatever model gets you the most resources is the best model.” The quote highlights the difficulty of separate models coupled with limited resources; the cultivation of a successful model is hampered by limited resources.

### **Opportunities and Recommendations**

Below are some ways to improve the QRC in the lead college model:

- Continue to intentionally embed the QRC into every campus structure at both the administrative and departmental levels.
- Change the website, emails, and any related electronic/print materials of QRC employees from Pomona College to Claremont Colleges.
- Create a 7C diversity leadership team comprised of representatives from the diversity services to foster intentional connections across the Claremont Colleges. Representatives should include, but are not limited to the QRC, Office of Black Student Affairs, Chicano/Latino Student Affairs, International Place, Student Disability Resource Center, and the Empower Center.
  - This collaboration would help align mission, vision, and values, as well as center the most marginalized of the margins.
  - Plan more QRC programming and outreach at Tranquada Student Services. Because it is seen as more centralized and accessible, more intentional programming at Tranquada Student Services could potentially reach students who would not visit the QRC due to perceived distance.

## 6. Help to develop goals to build the QRC strategic plan for the next five years

### Highlights

The first five years of the Queer Resource Center at the Claremont Colleges clearly laid a strong foundation for the next five. The QRC and its staff are well known across the 7C's and the quality of work is used as a benchmark for other programs and services at the Colleges. In order to best meet the growing needs of the LGBTQ+ and TGNC population, as well as engage in work that changes campus climate, the QRC will need to be intentional in the way it connects to the other campuses at the Claremont Colleges.

### Challenges

As one staff person remarked, "Diversity is seen as a concern to put resources to versus an institutional concern." This statement succinctly frames the Claremont Colleges' approach to diversity as reactive rather than proactive. For example, LGBTQ+ and TGNC students are mentioned in Pomona College's Strategic Diversity Plan, however, metrics and accountability on how to approach supporting these students in the future are missing intentionality and consistency across the 7Cs. This makes the gathering of data inconsistent and the determination and measurement of outcomes difficult or impossible.

### Opportunities and Recommendations

As strategic planning continues for the next 5 years, the review team suggests an emphasis on centering diversity, and specifically LGBTQ+ and TGNC issues as an institutional priority rather than a concern to respond to. Below are some suggestions to consider during the strategic planning process:

- Measure LGBTQ+ and TGNC student experiences in a holistic way. Often times LGBTQ+ and TGNC student experiences are measured in terms of the discrimination and othering they experience. Creating metrics that provide ways to capture how students' LGBTQ+ and TGNC identity contributes to their success. Unique, creative, and intentional ways to impact LGBTQ+ and TGNC students in all parts of their experience, not just the negative (academic issues, bias incidents, alcohol/drug issues).
- A high sense of entitlement among students was mentioned several times, a lack of comparative contextual knowledge by students seems to impact the work of the QRC. Suggestions on how to address this:
  - Connect students with other campuses and local community organizations to help them break the "Claremont Bubble."
  - Balance of empowering students to live holistic self-actualized lives, while preparing them for the "real world."

- Continue emphasis on community building. The small size of the campus communities requires a strong sense of community, and any conflict in the LGBTQ+ and TGNC community is felt much more acutely than on a larger campus. Strategic conflict resolution efforts should be made to address conflict that impacts the community.
- Developing stronger relationships between the QRC and LGBTQ+ and TGNC student organizations at each campus to maximize resources, create strategic partnerships, and adequate support systems across the diverse campuses.
- Continue to center the experience of QTPOCs, and other marginalized people within the LGBTQ+ and TGNC community in programs, services, and advocacy efforts.
- People who identify as transgender, gender non-conforming or who experience marginalization around gender identity (TGNC) were identified as a major component of the future of the QRC and the Claremont Colleges. Continuing to address understandings of gender identity and obstacles and barriers to full institutional inclusion of students marginalized around gender identity is essential to meeting the strategic goals of the QRC.
- Increase Alumni engagement from both the QRC and the Claremont Colleges development office(s).

<b>Limitations</b>
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The reviewers are grateful for the opportunity to be invited to explore and unpack the promise and potential of the Queer Resource Center in service of the Claremont Colleges. Through two days of nearly non-stop interactions with constituents, partners and stakeholders of the QRC, the team gathered an incredible amount of valuable input, and engaged in critical and constructive conversations. Yet any visit is bounded by the constraints of time, and yields just a snapshot of a place at a moment in time. Those obvious considerations join a few others as limitations to the scope and reach of the review:

- While a number of meetings with students were hosted by the review team, and offered tremendous insight and valuable conversations, the number of total student voices represented through these discussions (n<40) represented a smaller cohort than would be ideal.
- Further, the students that did gather for discussion seemed to group among collectives with similar experiences, articulated identities, or QRC-related roles.
- The voices of general students, students not aligned with or infrequent users of the QRC, were largely missing.
- Contributions and observations from graduate students of the Claremont Colleges was particularly difficult to gather (n=3).

- Alumni feedback was solicited through a series of conference calls, and invited through a dedicated email address, but contributions from alumni were limited (n<10).

Although the review process was initiated before the start of the fall semester, the QRC and its leadership was, at the time of the review, consumed by controversy around the inclusion and support of Queer and Trans People of Color, and perceptions and experiences of QTPOC as staff and constituents of the QRC. It is important to note that considerable effort was made to hear and understand those experiences within the context of the review's timeframe and articulated goals.

Finally, the reviewers recognize and understand that, as lenses for the review, we bring subjectivity, expertise and experience to the table that contributes and shapes our own observations and understandings of the QRC and its relationship to and service of the Claremont Colleges, and ultimately these observations, conclusions and recommendations. We believe our team's experiences offer a depth and richness that enhance this report, but also recognize the potential that our experiences have left us with blind spots or otherwise inadequately prepared us to adequately describe what we have seen and heard.

#### Reviewer Bios

**Raja Gopal Bhattar (they/them/theirs), External Reviewer**, is the Director of UCLA's LGBT Campus Resource Center. They are a nationally-recognized social justice trainer and educator and has published several articles on intersectional identity development and the experiences of LGBTQ+ professionals and students of color in higher education. They hold a Master's of Arts in Higher Education and Organizational Change from UCLA, a Master's in Higher Education and Student Affairs Administration from the University of Vermont and Bachelor's in Psychology and Hispanic Literature from Boston University. Raja has served as the Education Chair for the Consortium of LGBT Resource Professionals in Higher Education, the national Co-chair for the Asian Pacific Islander Knowledge Community and on the Southern California Executive Board for Region VI for NASPA, a national student affairs organization.

**Matthew Damschroder (he/him/his), Review Assistant**, is Assistant Dean of Students for Campus Life at Illinois Wesleyan University, which has served as his professional home since 1998, and his portfolio includes housing and residence life, fraternity and sorority life, student activities and leadership programs, orientation and first-year experiences and aspects of diversity and inclusion, including the support of LGBTQ+ and TGNC students. After completing undergraduate work at Drake University, he received his Master's in 2007 and Ph.D in 2015 from Illinois State University, where his doctoral research explored the essential value of resource centers that provide programming, advocacy services and support to students who

identify as lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, queer or within the domain of marginalized sexual orientation (LGBQ+) or gender identities (TGNC) as well as education and resource materials for allies and the campus community as a whole. In particular, the study considers: how Centers came to be and currently exist, the people and purposes that Centers serve, Center policies, programs and practices that focus on advocacy and identity affirmation, and the campus climate for LGBQ+ and TGNC students. Damschroder is active in GLACUHO, NASPA, ACPA, and the Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals.

**LB Hannahs (any & all), External Reviewer**, is the Director of LGBT Affairs and Coordinator for Social Justice Initiatives at the University of Florida. In this role, LB is responsible for support and advocacy for all students, faculty, and staff of marginalized genders and sexualities and education of LGBT issues for University of Florida. As Coordinator of Social Justice Initiatives LB is responsible for social justice educational opportunities throughout the broader campus community, including teaching and facilitating Gatorship - an intergroup dialogue peer education program. LB also serves as the Outreach and Advocacy Chair of the National Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals and is responsible for building relationships between the Consortium and other national organizations. LB holds an Associate's degree in Music Performance at Schenectady County Community College, a Bachelor's degree in Music Education, a Master's Degree in Higher Education Administration, both from Syracuse University, and is currently pursuing a PhD in Higher Education Administration at the University of Florida. Outside of professional duties, LB is a co-founder and member of the leadership team of Gainesville Equality Youth.

**Dr. Sumun Lakshmi Pendakur (she/her/hers), Internal Reviewer**, is the Associate Dean for Institutional Diversity at Harvey Mudd College. In her role, she directs the Office of Institutional Diversity, a multifaceted social justice education and leadership development center. In addition, she serves as the Chief Diversity Officer, partnering with Academic Affairs, to focus on campus-wide efforts related to access, equity, campus climate, and inclusion. Pendakur is a scholar-practitioner, as well as a highly skilled facilitator, social justice educator, and author. Sumi serves as a consultant, speaker, and facilitator regionally and nationally, helping campuses and other organizations build capacity for cultural competence, social justice, and equitable practices. Sumi's two primary research agendas are on Asian American students in higher education and practitioners' roles as change agents, transforming student experience and institutions from the inside. Her most recent publications are chapters in edited volumes: *Empowerment agents: Developing staff and faculty to support students at the margins* (in press) and *Going against the grain: Higher education practitioners countering neoliberalism and postracial ideology* (2014). Sumun has held leadership positions and presented her original research at NASPA, ACPA, NADOHE, NCORE, and ASHE. In addition, she is an Asian American

and Pacific Islander Research Coalition Fellow, the 2014-16 Co-Chair of NASPA Southern California, the 2015 Co-Chair for the NASPA Western Regional Conference Research Institute, as well as a 2014-15 NADOHE Chief Diversity Officer's Fellow.

Pendakur is a graduate of Northwestern University with a double major in Women's Studies and History and a Minor in Spanish. She holds an M.A. in Higher Education Administration from the University of Michigan. She received her doctorate in Higher Education Leadership from the USC Rossier School of Education.

<b>Gratitude</b>
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The committee wishes to extend many thanks to the Claremont Colleges community members who gave up their time to share their experiences of the QRC with the External Review Team. Further, we appreciate the invitation and willingness of the staff and administration of Pomona College, and the QRC for initiating this review, including the myriad of logistical details that were involved in its coordination. We appreciate our 7Cs hosts, and the deep hospitality shown to us from all campus quarters, including the students and others who graciously answered questions, provided clarification, and served as guides and ambassadors, helping the team get from meeting to meeting on time!

## References

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