How to Engage the Furman LGBTQ+ Community and promote Straight Allyship

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Our Initial Thoughts and Ideas

-What we noticed:
  ● A disconnect between the queer and straight communities on Furman’s campus
  ● FPA (Furman Pride Alliance) is productive and a great resource for queer students but can be improved in ways that foster more involvement within the queer community
  ● FPA may not do enough to promote awareness and to educate straight students

-Ways to improve:
  ● Create a better-functioning organization with clearly defined events/resources
  ● Events geared towards the LGBTQ+ community
  ● Events geared towards straight allyship
Background Research

- Laurel Westbrook: "Where the Women Aren't: Gender Differences in the Use of LGBT Resources on College Campuses." (2009)
  - Ways that people in the queer community, especially women, are excluded:
    - "Gender-blind organizing"
    - "Patrimonialism"
    - "Friendly-fire sexism"

- Strategies for inclusion:
  - Conscious organization of groups
  - Increase amount of leadership training and support from professional staff members
  - Institutionalize women's leadership
  - Establish an activist LGBT group on campus/include more activist LGBT events
Background Research cont.

Campus Pride
- some anonymity may be necessary
- LGBTQ+ folk should feel comfortable and like they have space

The Guardian: LGBT people need straight allies to lend a helping hand
-Netherlands 2017

-In wake of homophobic attack, hundreds of straight men led a march and held hands to show solidarity

- Alexander Pechtold, a Parliamentary leader in the Netherlands participated, and said, “In the Netherlands we think it is quite normal to express who you are ... it’s important that we show this week that it’s absolutely normal.”
Other Schools

University of Georgia  37,606 students
- 11 groups and programs centered around the LGBTQ+ community
  - Safe Space
  - Prism
  - Queeries
  - Lunch with leaders

Columbia University  7,970 students
- 11 undergraduate and 9 graduate programs/organizations
  - Different groups for different races and religions within the community
  - Proud Colors
  - GendeRevolution
  - Columbia IQ
### Other Schools cont.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University of Chicago</th>
<th>5,703 students</th>
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<tr>
<td>● 14 programs and organizations centered around LGBTQ community</td>
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<td>○ Pronoun hoedown</td>
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<td>○ The Sacred Flame</td>
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<td>○ Over the rainbow</td>
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<td>○ Asexuali-tea</td>
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<td>○ Groups for specific majors</td>
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<tr>
<th>University of Washington</th>
<th>46,081 students</th>
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<td>● The Q center</td>
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<td>● Gender neutral housing</td>
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<td>● Gender neutral bathrooms</td>
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<td>● Mostly a campus wide safe space</td>
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<td>● Gender and sexuality mentoring program</td>
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<td>● A trans/gender non-conforming discussion group</td>
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Other Schools Cont.

Wofford University

- 1,692 students

- Lgbtq community is only mentioned once on their website

- No programs or organizations
Interviews

- Students who identify as LGBTQ+ but who are not involved with FPA

- “It seemed like because I didn’t know a whole lot, I was inferior and did not belong.”

- “Leadership of FPA wants to go in different directions. Some want to educate allies [while] others want [FPA] to be more of a social club.”

- [I would feel more welcome] if FPA focused more on current events and education and less on individual experiences. While [individual experiences] are valuable, they should drive us to focus on current events and the wider community. I would attend a branch that was more education-based and involving of straight people.”
“[I would feel more welcome] if FPA made it public that allies are allowed there and being a space for them to want to come to and feel comfortable. Less cliquey, more welcoming. More split - some social, some programming, some events.”

“I would attend CLP’s that were centered around allyship and attracted cis, straight people [because] I feel like everyone who comes to “gay” [sic] CLP’s knows the basic stuff. It’s like preaching to the choir.”
Interviews

- Students who identify as heterosexual

- “I think some people feel like you have to identify as gay or queer to be involved...I think if more straight people did it, then it would encourage me to as well.”

- “Honestly, I think people would assume I was a lesbian if I went.”

- “I already feel pretty welcomed. I have never gone to a meeting...because I am not LGBTQ. But I enjoy supporting them!”
When asked about CLP’s and Events they would attend:

- “I attended ‘50 Shades of Gay’ freshman year. I would attend a drag show...might be kind of fun! Probably a documentary.”
- “Anything interesting. I really liked the ‘intersex’ one.”
Potential Calendar

Engaging the Furman community:

- Creating events that are geared to a variety of people
- Having workshops that will allow Straight allies to gain knowledge on LGBTQ+ affairs
- Social events like movies and bowling nights give a chance for LGBTQ+ and straight folk a chance to mingle and learn from one another
- Embracing the local community brings more perspectives for all the Furman Community

Examples from the Calendar:

- Queer Cinema Thursdays
- Open Safe Zone workshops
- The Southern Queer Panel
- Queer Halloween Dance
Recap/Conclusion

-Research
  - Lack of women’s involvement in LGBTQ+ spaces on campus; should be remedied by a more conscious organization of groups and institutionalized inclusion of women
  - Anonymity and safe space for LGBTQ+ is important, but this should be balanced with straight allyship

-Other Schools
  - Some schools are very proactive in keeping the LGBTQ+ community involved
  - Other schools not so much....

-Interviews
  - Don’t know direction of club
  - Don’t want to be involved due to lack of knowledge
  - Fear of being labelled “gay”

-Proposed Campus Events
  - Creating a variety of events that engage all of the population of Furman
  - Education of Queer culture in the local community to the Furman Community