

**20** GENDER &  
SEXUALITY  
CENTER  
est. 1995

**2014 – 2015 ANNUAL REPORT**

# A LANDMARK YEAR

This is the year we celebrated our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. We examined the archives and listened to the stories of many individuals who passed through UIC demanding greater access and inclusion while carving out space for queer scholarship and loving community to flourish. Their steadfast determination has been an inspiration to all of us on staff and will continue to shape the goals of the Center.

This is the year that the Supreme Court declared state bans on same sex marriage unconstitutional. While we celebrate all that this makes possible in our lives and our culture at large, we recognize that deep disparities persist for many LGBTQ people. For many undocumented, trans\* and genderqueer, especially trans\* and genderqueer people of color, and people who are experiencing homelessness, access is still largely denied and from our vantage point in a large urban public university, we can see how these gaps manifest on our campus and across the city of Chicago and so we continue to sharpen our focus on the work ahead.

Throughout the year we reached across disciplines and across generations; we cultivated dialogue and an increased sense of belonging. Throughout the year we persevered with the understanding that our efforts were having positive impacts in and outside of the classroom, on and off the campus. This report was created to capture some of the highlights and measurable results.

Thank you for your support of the Gender and Sexuality Center during this important anniversary year.

Let's keep moving forward together,

Megan Carney, Director

# MISSION

The Gender and Sexuality Center at UIC creates a more inclusive campus and catalyzes positive social change by challenging heteronormativity and promoting deeply engaged and life affirming thinking, learning, and action.

# VISION

The Gender and Sexuality Center envisions an equitable and affirming campus where everyone can pursue their academic, personal, and professional aspirations free from individual biases and systemic oppressions.

**“AS A QUESTIONING PERSON, I FELT LIKE I BELONGED HERE AND WOULD BE WELCOMED HERE.”**

- 2015 Lavender Graduate



GSC 20/20 Exhibition Opening



20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
Party Photo Booth

## VIBRANT CULTURAL SPACE



Archival Impulse Artists

### THE GSC LOUNGE AND GALLERY ARE AN ESSENTIAL PART OF WHO WE ARE.

We cultivate open spaces where people identifying across identity spectrums can connect across disciplines. This is where you can ask questions, try out ideas, and push your limits.

During this year, the Lounge and neighboring Gallery space were used to finish papers, teach seminars, facilitate discussions, curate art exhibitions, make art, lead brainstorming and committee meetings, host parties, watch webinars, eat lunch, organize programs, and gather for writing workshops.

## A BRIEF QUEER UIC HISTORY ...

In 1988, students registered The Pink Triangle Association of Gays and Lesbians at UIC to combat harassment and connect with others on the commuter campus. In 1993, the group, renamed as PRIDE, petitioned for a permanent office dedicated to addressing the concerns of LGB students, faculty, and staff. The Office opened in 1995 and within a few years incorporated programming related to trans\* and queer identities and added the "T" to the name. Today, the Gender and Sexuality Center works broadly across the campus with a strong network of allies and multi-layered partnerships to educate and engage around intersectional identities and inclusion.

This year 4 major programs – 3 exhibitions and 1 live storytelling event - captured the vitality and diversity of GSC stakeholders today. These programs attracted hundreds of visitors for dialogue and reflection on 20 years of education, activism, and change.

*GSC 20/20* highlighted the historical timeline of the Center's development through documents and objects pulled from the archives. Many 3-dimensional elements were on display as well as listening stations containing oral histories gathered in partnership with the Gender and Women's Studies program and featuring voices of LGBTQ alumni. In addition to the 80 people who attended the opening and the visitors throughout the exhibition, we also hosted 2 Gender and Women's Studies classes and 1 Sociology class.

*Archival Impulse* started as a capstone project for staff member and Museum and Exhibition Studies graduate student, Anna Lepsch, and became a public exhibition featuring original work by 7 UIC students who were invited to create artwork in response to the 20 years of history represented within the GSC 20/20 exhibition. Approximately 100 fellow artists, faculty advisors, parents and friends attended the opening reception and the exhibition attracted visitors through the end of the academic year.

*20 Queer Years: Many Stories Many Identities* was a live storytelling event produced in collaboration with Chicago's celebrated nonprofit, 2<sup>nd</sup> Story, and centered on tales of intersecting identities and diversity within the queer community of Chicago today. 75 people attended the event at Moxee on Maxwell Street to help raise money for our new Trans\* Student Fund and hear Jay Mueller, Julia Harris, Rebecca Kling and Vince Pagán share their stories.

*CHICAGO FAMILIES: Finding Home* is a citywide collaborative exhibition resulting from the GSC's role as an institutional partner in the Chicago Cultural Alliance. The extensive process of developing the exhibition allowed us to map queer stories of displacement, journey, chosen family, and arrival in relationship to the stories foregrounded by the Swedish American Museum, the Japanese American Service Committee, and the National Public Housing Museum. The exhibition remained open to the public at the Swedish American Museum from June – September 2015 and attracted hundreds of visitors.

## BOOK ENDS TO AN EXPERIENCE

During their first year, students involved in Queer Compass: Step One have opportunities to learn more about UIC and what it has to offer as well as build community on campus and develop their multiple identities. At the conclusion of their time here, we invite graduates to participate in the annual Lavender Graduation. No matter their level of involvement, students have opportunities to gain support, learn, grow, and thrive through participation in these and other dynamic public programs designed and facilitated by the staff of the GSC.

### QUEER COMPASS

is a first year program that supports LGBTQA students as they navigate the University, build community, discuss multiple identities, share skills, and document the college experience. In its second year of operation, the Queer Compass program strengthened the first year experience of the 11 students involved. Some of the topics in 2014-2015 were reflecting & planning, time management, goal setting, stress management, public speaking, and storytelling.



Words students used to describe how they felt in Queer Compass

### LAVENDER GRADUATION

is an annual hallmark event for the GSC to celebrate students' academic and personal achievements. The ceremony is open to undergraduate, graduate, and professional students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and ally (LGBTQA). Approximately 35 undergraduate, graduate, and professional students participated this year, in addition to over 250 guests.



Words graduates used to describe how the GSC supported their academic and social integration

## DYNAMIC PUBLIC PROGRAMS



Queer Compass Students & GSC Staff

Whether participating in Queer Compass, Lavender Graduation, or one of our many programs in between, students, faculty, staff, and community members engaged with the GSC in a variety of formats including lectures, panels, film screenings, and story circles. We gathered at the GSC and in other spaces around the campus and city to share our lives and learn from each other.

Some highlights of the year included:

***Criminal Queers* film screening 10/16/14**

***In These Boxes* 11/19/14**

***20th Anniversary Party* 11/20/14**

***People's State of the Union* 1/27 – 29/2015**

***The Mask You Live In* film screening 3/9/15**

***Queering Consent* 4/24/15**

***Pride Month Picnic* 6/18/15**

**“I THINK THE OPEN DIALOGUE FORMAT WAS VERY HELPFUL AND NATURAL. I HOPE SESSIONS LIKE THIS BECOME MORE FREQUENT IN THE FUTURE.”**

- Safe Zone Participant



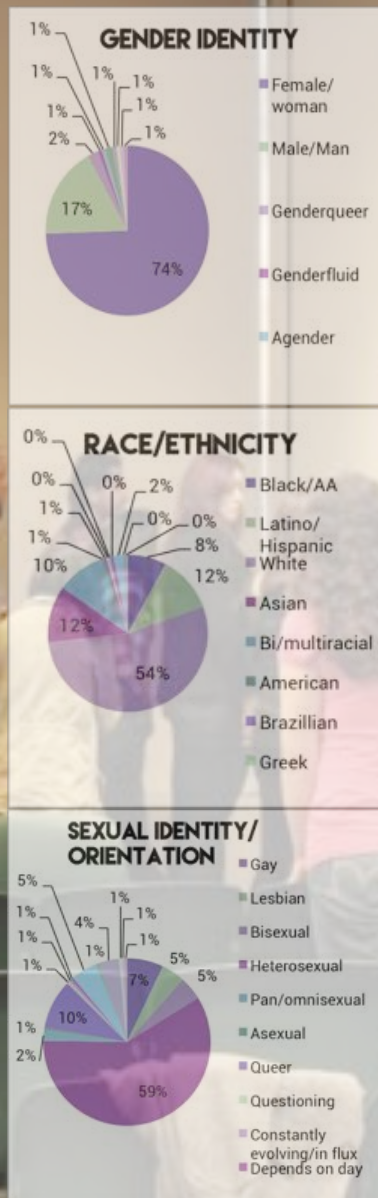
## SAFE ZONE

Safe Zone at UIC was started in 1992 and facilitated by Mark Martell, who worked in Residence Life at the time. In 2000, the Safe Zone program was transferred to the Office of GLBT Concerns (now the GSC) and led by Jacob Mueller, the first staff member, and Patrick Finnessy, the first full-time Director. Over the years, the program has been led and shaped by Liz Thomson, Moisés Villada, and Megan Carney, and most recently undergone an overhaul by Symone Simmons and Shay Phillips. Safe Zone is still in high demand among educators and administrators across disciplines and roles. It continues to evolve and respond as new research and expanded resources become available.

During the 2014-2015 academic year, we launched Safe Zone 2.0, a more interactive and discussion-based program using an intersectional framework to allow participants to grapple with the ways in which gender and sexuality have been constructed in the United States. The program helps participants understand how those constructions impact their experiences, the experiences of queer and trans\* people in particular, and others who may not identify as queer or trans\*.

With over 350 participants across multiple roles (61% were students, 24% were staff, 12% were faculty, and 3% were community members with some people occupying multiple roles), from a variety of units, departments, and organizations within and outside of UIC, Safe Zone 2.0 contributed to learning and understanding around gender and sexuality towards more inclusive organizations and institutions.

## Participant Demographics



# EXPANDED COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES

## **WOMEN AT WAR**

The repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell, women in combat zones, and pathways to justice for victims of military sexual assault are a few examples of recent policy shifts that are changing the landscape for women and LGBTQ people in military service. With an interest in increasing understanding and communication, the GSC partnered with Rivendell Theatre Ensemble and UIC's Institute for Policy and Civic Engagement to facilitate a series of public Town Hall discussions in conjunction with the world premiere of **WOMEN AT WAR**, a new play based on interviews with over 70 women who shared stories of deployment, survival, transformation, and loss. The Town Hall series engaged over 250 civilian and veteran Chicagoans in arts-based dialogue.

## **GENDER UMBRELLA SOCIETY**

What started as a social networking event in the fall led to the reinvention of a student organization and the launch of a new strategic initiative at UIC. New leaders of the Gender Umbrella Society raised funds from the Chancellor's Committee on the Status of LGBTQ People and Allies to begin a Peer Health Advocate program at UIC. Advocates will be trained by experts in the field and be available to accompany students as they access holistic health care and gender affirming surgeries at UIC.

## **CENTERS FOR CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING AND SOCIAL CHANGE**

As one of the 6 Centers on Campus, the GSC strengthened its commitment to partnership through increased collaborative programs. This year, the GSC led 1/3 of the Heritage Garden internship program supporting 12 students as they cultivated native plantings around campus while developing public programs that explore the interconnectedness between environmental sustainability, cultural sustainability, and social justice. GSC staff also co-facilitated the Reimagining Masculinity dialogue series, exploring issues of masculinity and intersecting identities, male privilege, and ways for men to be more actively involved in changing systems of oppression.

# THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS!

## UIC CAMPUS PARTNERS:

Academic and Enrollment Services  
Campus Recreation  
Chancellor's Committee on the Status of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer People, and Allies  
College of Applied Health Sciences  
College of Architecture Design and the Arts  
College of Business Administration  
College of Dentistry  
College of Education  
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences  
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Advisors  
College of Medicine  
College of Nursing  
College of Pharmacy  
College of Public Health  
College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs  
Counseling Center  
Gallery 400  
Graduate College  
Great Cities Institute  
Honors College  
Jane Addams College of Social Work  
Jane Addams Hull House Museum  
Mexican Student de Aztlán  
Museum and Exhibition Studies  
Native American Support Program  
Newman Center  
Office of Diversity  
Orientation Program  
Physical Therapy Department  
Centers for Cultural Understanding and Social Change  
Institute for Policy and Civic Engagement  
Urban Allied Health Program  
Writing Center

## GENDER AND SEXUALITY CENTER 2014 – 2015 STAFF

Megan Carney, Director  
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Shay Phillips, Graduate Student Worker  
Allison Ramirez, Student Graphic Designer  
Jackson Krause, Student Sound Designer  
Jonah Hill, Intern  
David Estell, Intern

## OFF CAMPUS PARTNERS:

Affinity Community Services  
2nd Story  
Chicago Cultural Alliance  
Dominican University  
Erikson Institute  
Japanese American Service Committee  
National Public Housing Museum  
Oakton Community College  
One More Chance Clinic  
Quare Square Collective  
Rivendell Theater Ensemble  
Sistah Sinema  
Swedish American Museum  
U.S. Department of Arts and Culture  
Windy City Media  
Youth Empowerment Performance Project

