The History of the Rainbow Center at UConn: An Oral and Written History Project

### Purpose
The purpose of this assessment was to document the history of the Rainbow Center, including what led to the founding, and how it changed over time.

### Literature Review
- **1969:** Stonewall Riot
- **1971:** First LGBTQ Center opened at the University of Michigan
- **1973:** UConn Gay Alliance at UConn
- **1977:** Second LGBTQ Center opened at Minnesota State University
- **1979:** Storrs Gay Coalition at UConn
- **1980s:** Student Affairs practitioners began to utilize student development, identity, and activist theory to justify creation of intentional, inclusive space for empowerment of marginalized groups (Ringgenberg, 1989). Multicultural Affairs offices also began to be created (Manning, 1988)
- **1990s:** Majority of existing LGBTQ Centers in the United States are formed
- **1998:** University of Wyoming student, Matthew Shepard, is murdered in hate crime

### Methodology
**Participants:** Key Stakeholders, Center Directors, and Administrative Staff

**Data Collection:**
- **Interviews:** In person and by phone
- **Document Collection:** Rainbow Center Files, The Dodd Research Center at UConn, Daily Campus Archives, Presidential Archives, and Board of Trustees Archives

**Data Analysis:**
- **Interviews:** Transcribed and coded for key historical events and openly for emergent themes. Organized in order by date and used constant comparative analysis to identify additional participants, and to confirm themes and events from the interviews

### Conclusions
- Access to and visibility through space was important.
- Students and staff took political and personal risks in the creation and continuation of the Center.
- Support from other cultural centers was crucial to the Rainbow Center’s success.
- Having access to financial and political resources was important for the Center.
- The success of the Center depended on energy and momentum of students.
- Promoting diversity on staff has been a continued goal.

### Findings

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<td><strong>Location:</strong></td>
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<td>Whitney House</td>
<td>SU 403</td>
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| **Goals:** | Develop Center as a resource | Address campus climate issues | Make LGBTQ students and issues "part of the fabric of the institution"
| **Challenges:** | Institutionalized homophobia | "Unwelcoming" campus climate | Lack of diversity on staff |
| **Resources:** | Budget | Partnerships with cultural centers | Resources: |
| | | State-wide organizations | **Student workers** |
| | | Other departments (i.e. Athletics and Human Resources) | **Faculty/staff support** |
| **Major Programs:** | Out to Lunch | Out to Lunch | **Cultural centers** |
| | The Speakers Bureau | SafeZone Training | **Community** |
| | Safe Zone Month | CommunityE weekly e-mail | **Major Programs:** |
| | Education and referrals | Café Q | **QRRN** |
| | Boxed Lunch Speakers | | **LGBTQ Awareness Month** |

### Future Research
- **Campus Climate for LGBTQ students at UConn**
- **Identify the number LGBTQ students at UConn**
- **Interview students involved in the founding**

### Implications for Practice
- **Importance of Archiving**
- **Knowledge of cultural center creation**
- **Knowledge of LGBTQ students through identification and tracking**

### Participants
- Jasmin Estrada, Ben Jones, Sarah Lindahl, Danielle Sosias, Shawn Washart