Project Description

The Women and Gender Resource Center (WGRC) does the daily work of supporting students with marginalized identities in their holistic wellness and academic endeavors at the UA. We are part of the Inclusion and Multicultural Engagement (IME) department and are housed alongside African American Student Affairs (AASA), Asian Pacific American Student Affairs (APASA), the Adalberto and Ana Guerrero Student Center (GSC), Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Questioning Resource Center (LGBTQ+RC), Native American Student Affairs (NASA) and the Immigrant Student Resource Center (ISRC). We are advocates doing everything within our power to create welcoming and safe environments for the students we serve. We are dedicated to decolonizing/indigenizing the campus, following the lead of the Tohono O’odham whose land we live and work on, and whose ancestral wisdom will ultimately save us. The WGRC core value is intersectional feminism, centering and serving the most marginalized students, particularly the special populations described in the SSF Survey, including women, low-income and students of color.

We run a drop-in center where students come to access resources, get support, explore gender, better understand how patriarchy impacts their lives, and learn about systemic oppression. We host speakers, book clubs, and discussions for undergraduate and graduate students to continue to name and unpack how to reframe gender dynamics for the liberation of all genders. We prioritize mental health and wellness initiatives, on campus jobs, leadership development and post-learning opportunities. In the big picture, WGRC strives to create change on campus in response to sexism, ableism, racism, classism, transphobia and misogyny informed by the inequitable and unjust realities of women of color, transwomen of color, low-income first generation students, disabled students, and LGBTQ communities. For example, Black and Latinx trans women make up the majority of the 41 trans and gender non conforming folks murdered in 2020. Additionally, 4-year university graduation rates for bachelor degree-seeking Black, Native American and Latinx women as well as low-income (federal pell grant qualifying) students continues to be disproportionate to their white (and non-pell) peers.

Since its inception the WGRC has been committed to the work of undoing patriarchal systems that harm all students at the UA through the oppression of women, trans, and non-binary folx. The FORCE internship uses a queer Black feminist perspective and pedagogy, which exposes interns to new ways of thinking and interacting in the world. All students who access services through the WGRC are encouraged to see how patriarchy has affected their lives through stifling their creativity, encouraging violence, and perpetuating gender roles in regards to career paths and finances, to name a few. Additionally, the WGRC recognizes the correlation between men of color with the lowest retention rates and their participation in our patriarchal society that tells them they can’t ask for help, they can’t seek counseling services, they have to financially take care of their families, etc. We have a long history doing social justice work on this campus and wouldn’t be here without the support of the SSFAB.

Undergraduate Student Impact

The WGRC interacts with over 6700 students annually through our programming, advisement, center space, and feminist pharmacy. We serve undergraduate students who largely report experiencing systemic inequity such as on-campus bias-related incidents, disparities in access to resources and navigational capital. The WGRC provides a space for students to feel safer showing up as their full selves with all of their multiple identities and provides support to work through their identity development. The WGRC values healing and therefore hosts weekly discussion and support groups,
movement related programs, and art-based programs that center healing, overall wellness, and mental health for students.

The WGRC also provides multiple employment and leadership development opportunities for students. We offer on-campus job opportunities for Pell grant qualifying work-study desk assistants, who learn real-world career skills and support the center’s operations. The most comprehensive opportunity for student growth and development is our internship, Feminists Organized to Resist, Create and Empower (FORCE). Throughout the course, students have the opportunity to collaborate with campus and community members, and work through conflict with transformative justice values. Not only does the course teach essential knowledge and skills for 2021’s job market (such as social media, event planning, presenting, and intergroup dialogue), the internship also has long-standing partnerships with Tucson organizations which may lead to internships and job opportunities upon graduation. We couple these experiential learning opportunities with career preparation programs to educate students about resume and cover letter writing, pay negotiation and interviews. We aim to provide skills, tools, and community for each student to have what they need to feel whole and prepared for their college experience and beyond.

**Graduate Student Impact**

Graduate students also utilize our Center space as a resource to study, and attend our wellness programming and support groups. In the last two years, the WGRC built a powerful collaboration with the Graduate Students of Color organization hosting multiple programs together, including partnering on HERstory Month. We also provide 1-on-1 weekly supervision and mentorship, professional development in the form of workshops and conferences, and the opportunity to turn theoretical knowledge into practice for our graduate assistant. The WGRC GA is integrated fully into the WGRC team and the IME department, fostering community and allowing for additional knowledge-sharing opportunities.

**Assessment**

The WGRC is committed to quality and comprehensive assessments and evaluations to continue to paint an accurate picture of our work and enhance our programs and services. Through a strong partnership between Initiatives for Organizational Inclusion (IOI) and Inclusion and Multicultural Engagement (IME), WGRC’s programming and student support data has been, and will continue to be, robust. We have collected data about student participation in programming, types of programming offered, staff one-on-ones with students, topics covered during the one-on-ones, the number of student referrals to CAPS, CATcard swipes in the center, and social media engagement. We do in depth formative and summative interviews with students in the FORCE internship program, which helps inform our pedagogy for the highest degree of student learning and development.

**Longevity**

UArizona still has not institutionally funded the WGRC, as it has many of the other Cultural & Resource Centers. WGRC continues to be a reality because of the commitment and passion of SSFAB members, and your commitment to having a women’s center on our campus. Institutional funding remains our long-term goal and we continue to work toward it. We have seen increased investment on the part of the institution over the past few years and we remain optimistic. Currently, the institution is investing in a permanently funded Coordinator position; operations funding to support the Coordinator position; funding for student staff to run the Center’s front desk; and a small pool of funding for wellness programming. Our hope is that our institutional support will continue to grow to cover the full costs to run a robust Center and that our SSF ask will shrink with future applications.