

## West Chester University

### The Center for Trans and Queer Advocacy (Formerly LGBTQA Services) Name Change Talking Points

In the Fall of 2017, the LGBTQA Services staff started working on a name change for our office. We received various forms of feedback from students, staff, faculty and alumni regarding the name change process. Additionally, we did benchmarking looking at other institutions that use Trans and/or Queer in the name of their center. Ultimately, the naming of an LGBTQIA+ space can be a difficult and complicated task. The language around identities, sexualities and genders is nuanced and complex. Our new name **The Center for Trans and Queer Advocacy** aligns more with the students and communities we support and advocate for every day. The new name speaks more to our desire to build community, advocate and affirm the identities and experiences of LGBTQIA+ people and people with marginalized genders and sexualities. In addition, the new name captures the breadth of our programming, services, community building, trainings, and reflection/exploration around gender and sexuality that our students and communities experience. We believe the new name is still accessible (as much as it can be) and that it won't confuse people about the mission and work of the center. We are excited that we are leading the way in the PASSHE system and broader as the only institution that would center Trans people in the name of our center first. Given the disproportionate oppression that Trans and Non-Binary people face, centering Trans first in the name was an important distinction for us to make. Lastly, it is a call to action and accountability for all of us to do better in actively supporting and celebrating our Trans and Non-Binary communities. The Center for Trans and Queer Advocacy staff looks forward to working in solidarity with you as this name change shift will have a major impact on the communities that we collectively serve at WCU.

- **Our intention is to be more inclusive with the use of Trans and Queer:** We understand that not everyone that will utilize our center, services and programs will connect and identify with the words Trans and Queer. We truly value all perspectives and understand the complexity. During the name change process, our staff took all feedback seriously and ultimately believe that the use of Trans and Queer allows us some flexibility and room to discuss the vast diversity that exist within our communities. Ultimately, we don't believe there is a "name" or "word" that fully captures the complexity of LGBTQIA+ identities, communities and experiences. Presently, there isn't a "word" or list of letters that will fully feel inclusive to each individual person. Our hope is that the new name will help facilitate dialogue and conversation and we invite this with openness. The use of Trans and Queer is meant to still include LGBTQIA+ identities and is not meant to eliminate them. In fact, we will continue to use multiple terms and language to refer to our diverse communities because we understand the complexity of language and want people to see themselves in our work and our center as we aim to create safer spaces where people can be themselves.
- **I thought Queer was a negative and harmful word:** Well, depends on the context, history and the individual person's relationship to the word. Yes, for many there is a derogatory, harmful and violent historical (and still present) relationship to this word and we truly respect that viewpoint. Additionally, in many communities there has been a reclaiming of this word too. For many, Queer resonates, affirms and validates their identities and experiences. The word Queer can have a myriad of definitions and meanings for people that identify within the LGBTQIA+ community and for those that do not identify within the community. The new name invites dialogue and learning. We hope that you will be actively involved in having respectful discussion about the complexity of the words Trans and Queer, which we hope will lead to deeper understanding.
- **What if I don't identify within the Trans and Queer community (LGBTQIA+) can I still use the words Trans and Queer:** It's okay to say the words Trans and Queer. It's all about context. If you are saying the name of the center, describing our services etc there is nothing wrong with that. There is something wrong with labeling a person and placing an identity on someone. It's important to let people self-identify with the language that makes sense and resonates for them! The words Trans and Queer can have a myriad of meanings to people (historical and current), so it's best to be in dialogue and discussion with people.
- **Why didn't you use Gender and Sexuality in the new name:** One of the student organizations that supports LGBTQIA+ students is Sexuality and Gender Alliance (SAGA). We wanted to support the students and all of their wonderful efforts and not take away, confuse or overshadow all the amazing work they do for the campus community.
- **How do we create a culture shift-Name changes take time:** This will be a major shift for West Chester University. Therefore, over the next semester and beyond, we will be working to update the campus and broader community about the name change. We recognize our former name has an important history, which will undoubtedly remain meaningful to many students, faculty, staff, alumni and community members. We understand that people will continue to use our old name at times. This is okay. We just ask that everyone do their best in helping us transition to our new name. In addition, we also realize that cultural shifts can be challenging. We ask that you help us make that shift and that it is okay if you are having personal tensions around this shift. Engage with those tensions, seek out your own educational resources, engage in respectful dialogue with others etc. because ultimately our goal is to move from allyship to advocacy and affirm, validate and support our LGBTQIA+ communities.
- **Still have questions and would like to learn more:** Feel free to stop by our office in Sykes Student Union 250 or email us at [TransAndQueer@wcupa.edu](mailto:TransAndQueer@wcupa.edu). Please check out our website for upcoming trainings and programs. people in their advocacy. Please check our website [wcupa.edu/TransAndQueer/](http://wcupa.edu/TransAndQueer/) for more information about our programs and events.