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1 Mission and Purpose

1.1 Introduction and History

The need for a resource center dedicated specifically to queer issues at Rice University is both immediate and historied. Currently, according to U.S. News and World report, Rice University is the only top 20 university in the U.S. that does not have a resource center of this kind. As we look towards the second century of our university’s future, this unique position is not one we want to maintain. The differences in visibility, resources, support and advocacy for queer students at Rice versus comparable institutions are striking and need to be addressed both quickly and boldly.

Rice’s mission statement emphasizes that the university “seeks to fulfill this mission by cultivating a diverse community of learning and discovery that produces leaders across the spectrum of human endeavor.” We believe that this mission cannot be adequately accomplished without taking gender and sexuality diversity into account. Currently, the lack of visible and institutionalized resources for queer members of Rice’s community does not only hurt existing community members but also discourages potential queer community members from joining in Rice’s mission.

However, the need for a queer resource center is also one that has a long history on Rice’s campus and is now a coordinated effort among several different existing organizations and resources. In fact, a 2004 article from the Houston Chronicle detailed the plan for Rice to open a center very similar to the one we are currently proposing. Additionally, Study of Women, Gender and Sexuality professor, Brian Riedel, proposed a LGBT Coordinator staff position in 2007 which was rejected.

In 1979, the Rice Gay/Lesbian Support group, a precursor to Queers and Allies, was first started and recognized by the Student Association. Since then, support for queer students on campus has only grown, including the Ally training program as well as a special QPR training to help LGBT individuals. Last semester, Query was formed in response to the need for a more intimate space focused on both academic discussions and advocacy/activism on campus. Also, students began working with the Student Wellbeing Office to coordinate more visible resources and support, resulting in Rice’s first Pride Week supported by a Rice institution since the original resource center disbanded. The week included events and discussion hosted by Query, Queers and Allies, and the Student Wellbeing Office.

We, the founding members of the Queer Resource Center, envision a campus where student organizations, university institutions, academic departments, and all other facets of the university have a centralized organizing resource to work together to promote queer visibility, support and advocacy within our community.

1.2 Mission Statement

The mission of the Queer Resource Center is to promote queer visibility, support, and advocacy on and around the Rice University campus.

Visibility: Provide a physical safe space that raises awareness of our presence on campus.

Support: Dynamically meet the needs of the community through programming, resources, and education.

Advocacy: Promote policies and programs that seek to recognize all experiences and celebrate all identities relating to gender and sexuality at Rice and beyond.

2 Organizational Structure

2.1 Membership

2.1.1 General

Any person affiliated with the Rice community is implicitly a member of the Center. Any individual in the Rice community who wishes to become more involved with the inner workings of the Center may attend meetings, volunteer for the Center, and/or run for a leadership position.

Should a member of the organization disregard the Center’s policies or disrespect the organization, that member may be asked to present their story to the officers of the Center. The presiding officers then vote on the removal of the member. A 2/3 majority is required for expulsion. Following a decision, the student will be notified in a timely manner.

To comply with university requirements, at no time shall fewer than half of the organization’s leadership be student members, only student members who are not on Disciplinary Probation or otherwise prohibited from holding office in a registered student organization shall be eligible to seek and hold office.

2.1.2 Privileged Membership

All facilitators, the treasurer, and the president will be considered privileged (voting) members of the Center. Each committee, the treasurer, and the president are each granted one vote (ie, co-facilitators of the same committee do not receive more than one vote).

2.2 Leadership

2.2.1 General

The Queer Resource Center is to be headed a president.

The funds of the Center are to be managed by a treasurer.

The goals and efforts of the Center are to be split among several committees. These committees, which may range from activism to event-planning and education, are to be headed by one facilitator or two co-facilitators. The number of committees and the specific goals of any particular committee should be flexible, shifting over time to dynamically meet the needs of the Rice community. After the initial establishment of the Center, adding or removing a committee from the Center requires an official vote (see 2.2.5).

Club members may be members, facilitators, or co-facilitators of as many committees as they desire. However, the roles of president and treasurer should at no time fall upon the same individual.

2.2.2 Officers

The duty of the president is to oversee the activities and efforts of the Queer Resource Center on a large scale, to both attend and lead all facilitator meetings, and, when necessary, to delegate unallocated tasks to the facilitator in the best position to complete the task. The president should also serve as the primary point of contact when reaching out to other clubs, organizations, and the administration.

The duty of the treasurer is to oversee and manage the funding that the Center is given, to record all purchases, and to aid any committees aimed at fund-raising and securing additional funds for use of the Center, or take point in this effort if no such committee exists.
The duty of a facilitator is to oversee the specific committee of which they are the facilitator. In doing so, the facilitator is to make decisions on events, speakers, training, etc, as they see fit and as assigned to them by the president.

The removal process of an officer is the same as the removal of a member.

2.2.3 Faculty Sponsors

The Center is to be run with direct oversight from the Office of Multicultural Affairs and the Office of Student Wellbeing. The Center is to have at least one sponsor from each Office who is a member of the Rice faculty or staff and who plans to be at Rice for the full academic year. It is envisioned that these sponsors will meet periodically with the president to discuss the current state and goings on of the Center, as well as to provide input on plans for upcoming events and proposed changes to the Center.

Additionally, both Offices should require an end-of-year report from the Center, summarizing the work done in the past academic year and plans for the work to be done in the upcoming year. We hope that the Queer Resource Center will become ingrained part of both Offices and the Rice community as a whole, persistently and uncompromising a presence and active force on campus, resilient to the changing students and staff who might be working with the Center at a particular point in time.

2.2.4 Elections

Elections will take place during the second semester of each academic year. Elections for facilitators are only to be performed by the members of the committee of which the facilitator is running for office. The composition of a particular committee is to be determined by those who see themselves as the members of that committee. Ambiguous membership is to be resolved by the president. A 2/3 majority vote of these individuals is required for the election of a facilitator. In the event that a consensus cannot be reached, more than one individual can run as join co-facilitators, or the president can appoint a facilitator (or several co-facilitators).

The offices of treasurer and president are to be voted on by the privileged members of the Center only. Both quorum and a 2/3 majority vote is required for a successful election.

The president will inform all members of the Center that a vote to elect new officers will be occurring no less that one week before the vote is to take place.

2.2.5 Decision Making and Voting

If a quorum of the Center can easily come to a decision on an issue that concerns more than one committee, no official vote is required. Any time a committee or individual requests Center funds, an official vote is required.

If an official vote is required, the voting process is similar to that of voting in an election. A quorum is required, only privileged members may vote, announcements of the vote will be made at least 24 hours in advance of the decision to be made, and a 2/3 majority vote is required to reach a final decision.

2.2.6 Quorum

If at any given meeting of the Center, if one facilitator from 3/4 of the committees are present, the president is present, and the treasurer is present, then that group shall act with the full authority of the Center.
2.3 Meetings

Meetings will be held as frequently as necessary at the discretion of the president. It is suggested that meetings take place no less frequently than biweekly, and that the location of the meetings take place in the QRC Office Space.

The meetings are open to all members of the Center, regardless of position. Non-officers may attend meetings at their leisure, with no requirement of participation. Privileged members are expected to attend all meetings. Excessive unexcused absences may be sufficient reason for disciplinary review.

The Center meetings will not use any official rules of order; however, the president is to be seen as the presiding authority over the meeting and is expected to set the agenda and tone of the meeting. Meetings will be a discussion-based open forum, which allows all members, regardless of position, to express their thoughts and feelings. Each facilitator, as well as the treasurer and president, will have an opportunity to share the affairs of their committee or duty, and call to vote any matters they see fit.

2.4 Financial Procedures

2.4.1 General

There shall be neither dues required of members nor fines imposed on members as a result of misbehavior. The duties of the treasurer are explained in section 2.2.2.

2.4.2 Club Funds

All funds gathered by the organization must be deposited into a club account through the Office of Multicultural Affairs within one business day of their receipt.

Any member of the Center can request and spend funds. The approval of such a fund allocation always requires an official vote (see 2.2.5).

2.4.3 Misuse of Funds

The sponsor shall refer to the relevant University office(s) any member reasonably suspected of spending Center funds without authority, failing to deposit Center funds appropriately, or otherwise misusing or abusing Center funds.

3 Other Policies

3.1 Nondiscrimination Policy

This organization shall not discriminate against individuals for any reason. (The university requires that we list examples, such as race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national or ethnic origin, ancestry, age, disability, veteran status, or favorite color).

While this Center is oriented towards serving the needs of the queer community on Rice’s campus, membership is in no way limited to individuals who identify as queer. On the contrary, allies are a valued and integral part of the organization, and are welcomed and encouraged to get involved.
3.2 Anti-Hazing Policy

This organization shall not engage in any form of hazing, as defined by the Code of Student Conduct and any other applicable Rice University rules and regulations.

3.3 Conflict of Interest Policy

The business of this organization shall not be conducted in any manner that creates a conflict of interest or the reasonable appearance thereof.

3.4 Approval of Contracts

No commitments or contracts shall be made by any member of this organization on behalf of this organization without the approval of both the sponsor and a majority vote of the Executive Committee.

3.5 Subordination to the SA

This organization shall recognize the primacy of the Student Association Executive Branch, the Student Senate, and ultimately, the Student Association. This organization shall be bound by the requirements of the Constitution of the Student Association and any associated rules and regulations. This constitution and any bylaws or policies adopted by this organization are subordinate to the Constitution of the Student Association.

3.6 Approval by SA Parliamentarian

Amendments approved by the membership shall be submitted to the Student Association Parliamentarian. Amendments may not take effect until they are approved by the Parliamentarian or the Student Senate in accordance with the Constitution of the Student Association. The Date of Last Revision on the title page of this constitution shall be updated to reflect the date of approval by the Parliamentarian or Senate.

3.7 Sponsor Replacement

If the sponsor resigns, is replaced, or is otherwise unable to continue serving as the sponsor for the remainder of the academic year, the organization shall select a new sponsor and notify the Office of Student Activities of the change within 15 class days.

3.8 Upkeep of the Constitution

3.8.1 Annual Review

After each annual election of facilitators, the constitution should be reviewed in its entirety by a quorum of the Center to ensure the accuracy of the information and that it reflects the goals of the Center at the given time.

3.8.2 Amendment

Any proposed amendments to this constitution should be submitted in writing to the president, who will then disseminate an announcement of the proposition to the facilitators.
3.8.3 Notice

The president will inform the facilitators that a vote to approve an amendment will be occurring no less than one week before the vote is to take place.

3.8.4 Voting Requirements

A 2/3 majority of the privileged members of the Center is required to approve and enact an amendment to this constitution.

Amending the bylaws and the constitution require the same procedure.

3.8.5 Approval by the SA

Proposed amendments to this constitution should be reviewed by the Student Association Parliamentarian. Amendments to the organization’s constitution can only be adopted by a 3/4 vote with prior notice having been given at the previous meeting. Before going into effect, the amendment must be approved by the Student Association Parliamentarian and ratified by the Student Association Senate. The Date of Last Revision on the title page of this constitution shall be updated to reflect the date of the Senate’s ratification.