

Annual Report, AY 2020-2021

Purpose

Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Queer Issues (CACQI) works to identify institutional, structural and cultural initiatives that advances the UC Merced campus climate for the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Trans, and broader Queer folx (LGBTQ+) and expanding community. The advisory committee advocates on campus on behalf of the LGBTQ+ community for participation, success and visibility across multiple dimensions of inequality including, but not limited to, gender, race, ethnicity, class, age, religion, ability, veteran, marital and familial status. The committee operates under a shared governance model, intentionally including undergraduate and graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, senate and non-senate faculty and staff members.

Mission

The LGBTQ+ Advisory Committee identifies issues and makes recommendations for the inclusion and advancement of the LGBTQ+ and expanding community at UC Merced. With our continued growth, we adopt action plans to ensure forward movement in creating a welcoming, affirming, equitable and vibrant learning, working and living environment for all UC Merced community members.

Context

We began as an advisory committee in 2015 and became a Chancellor's committee in September 2016. As the University of California Merced continues to move beyond the 2020 plan and in conjunction with our Vision and Change Alignment Map as a guide for decision making, CACQI aims to create transformative change that supports, affirms and empowers our LGBTQ+ community.

Priorities AY 2020-2021

This year, CACQI met remotely on a monthly basis during the COVID-19 pandemic and also participated in meetings with the Diversity Collective on campus. Given the online constraints, we focused our attention on initiatives that best aligned with our current state, including plans for an increased CACQI presence upon our return to campus in the Fall. In this report, we speak to our main accomplishments, our plans for the future, and our areas of concern that can be addressed by UC Merced administration.

Accomplishments

CACQI had a number of accomplishments with regards to our priorities as well as additional victories this year which have been highlighted below.

Contributions to the UC Merced's Commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

- **Advocacy for LGBTQ+ Students in the Pandemic:** In September 2020, CACQI contacted the EDI office to provide three recommendations for supporting LGBTQ+ students during the pandemic. These recommendations were based on an [article](#) published in the *Journal of Multimodal Rhetorics*, which also included materials on combating anti-racist policies during the pandemic.
- **Understanding Campus Data Collection and Aggregation:** Started AY2019-2020, this year, we established a subcommittee that (1) Established a working relationship with the Office of Institutional Readiness and Decision Making with the primary contact Cinamon Danube, (2) Acquired existing data on LGBTQ+ representation, retention, recruitment, and climate, and (3) Established four data analysis pipelines for data collection about, i) undergraduates, ii) graduates, iii) faculty, and, iv) staff. The subcommittee found that “Gender” (understood as a social concept) and “sex” (understood as a biological concept) have been collapsed into one category, “gender.” In addition, only two options were provided: male and female. Additionally, it is worth noting that every non-female response is collapsed into “male” for Federal reporting. ***This raises several concerns:***
 - If “male” and “female” are being used in data collection, then it should be known these are best interpreted as biological concepts and thus are better described using the “sex” label. If, however, the aim is to collect data on *gender identity* then terms including, “man”, “woman”, “two-spirit”, “gender fluid”, etc., are more appropriate.
 - Those identifying with a non-binary gender identity are being classified as men.
 - While only 2% of staff at UC Merced have reported discrimination of the basis of sexual orientation, only 2.5% of staff are queer identifying. This raises the possibility that many queer identifying staff may be experiencing discrimination. Working with members of the Office of Institutional Readiness and Decision Making, we are currently looking at targeted analyses of existing data to confirm this possibility.
- **Contributions to the UC Merced's Strategic Plan:** CACQI submitted a memo to EVC/Provost Gregg Canfield about the diversity language in the Strategic Plan draft, specifically the Academic Planning Targets. The memo addressed the absence of sexual orientation and gender expression (identity) from the diversity measures in the

Academic Planning Targets developed by the Academic Planning Work Group. To address these concerns, CACQI met with Kurt Schneir and Laura Martin to discuss the memo in Spring (3/31), which resulted in a revised Strategic Plan (4/13) which included “sexuality” in the diversity measures. **Further recommendations:**

- In response to the revised 4/13 Strategic Plan, CACQI recommended that “gender identity” be used in place of or in addition to “gender”; similarly, that “sexual orientation” be used in place of “sexuality”. These terms are more appropriate given wider usage, and are consistent with the system wide policies on EDI (in particular, the Regents 4400 policy), and these considerations should be included in future planning.

CACQI Events On Campus

In addition to these contribution on campus policy and initiatives, CACQI also participated in the following campus activities:

- **Virtual Dialogue Session: Struggle and Excellence in Queer Literature:** In collaboration with the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, CACQI hosted a Lunch & Learn event on Struggle and Excellence in Queer Literature. CACQI invited Mr. William Johnson, Deputy Director of Lambda Literary (Brooklyn, NY) to lead this conversation on “Struggle and Excellence in Queer Literature.” This Zoom event brought together faculty, students and staff and is archived [here](#).
- **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Open House:** CACQI presented at the EDI Open House event in Fall 2020 over Zoom. This involved a brief presentation about the mission and achievements of CACQI, and hosting a break-out room for those interested in learning more about CACQI. *(This event was intended to be an in-person event in the Fall).*

Other Contributions to Campus

- **Participation in Diversity Collectives Group:** The co-chairs of CACQI serve as members of the Diversity Collectives Group. This group meets once per month with the EDI office, and provides an opportunity for all three of the Chancellor’s Committees (CCCI, CACSW, CACQI) to discuss their ongoing and future work. CACQI notes that this group is especially valuable in, for example, the ways that it is creating more opportunities for intersectional projects across each of the committees.
- **UC Merced Hiring Processes:** CACQI continues to meet with potential new hires who request a conversation with the Committee.

- **UC Merced Consultation:** CACQI continues to provide consultation on messaging, e.g. the 2021 Pride Month message to the wider campus community.

CACQI Organizational Activities

- **Branding and Logos:** New Text-based logos were requested and designed with the UC Merced Marketing Department. CACQI is in the process of working towards a slightly more distinctive logo that will incorporate a rainbow color-scheme and keywords that signal our values.
- **Updates to CACQI Membership and Charter:** The CACQI Charter specified that the Committee would aim to have three co-chairs, ideally including a faculty, staff, and graduate student. In addition, it signified that the Committee should consist of members from the following groups: undergraduate students, graduate students, senate faculty, non-senate faculty, and staff-- and further, that the majority of the Committee shall consist of members who identify within the LGBTQ+ spectrum. These aims remain in the Charter as aspirational, but CACQI will be relaxing its own requirements on membership due to difficulties in finding sufficient membership to meet these goals. The Committee of AY2020-2021 had several conversations about this subject. We believe that issues to do with climate are a contributing factor to our challenge with membership and recruitment.

Priorities & Requests

After careful consideration of the issues and recommendations listed above, CACQI has set the following as their priorities for the 2021-2022 academic year.

Priorities for AY 2021-2022

- **Launch of LGBTQ+ Mentoring Program:** CACQI benefits from the expertise of one of our members who helped to create the *Women in STEM* mentoring program at UC Merced. CACQI is in the early phase of developing a similar mentoring program for the LGBTQ+ community.
- **Launch of LGBTQ+ Awards Program:** The tentatively titled, *LGBTQ+ Stories Initiative*, program will recognize, celebrate, and encourage the integration of LGBTQ+ issues and content into courses, seminars, invited speaker series, and other venues. The goal is to identify and reward students, faculty, and staff who have contributed to the promotion of LGBTQ+ issues. CACQI plans to run an open call for nominations, and then to award up to five individuals with \$500 for their contributions to our LGBTQ+ community and the education of the campus as a whole.

- **Launch of Events Partnership Awards Program:** CACQI intends to set aside funding for use in supporting the events of other Chancellor’s Committees (i.e., for intersectional efforts), and other groups or persons on campus running events germane to our mission. In particular, we hope to support the graduate and undergraduate queer organizations on campus. (e.g., Lambda Alliance).

Requests & Recommendations

- **Staff support for CACQI Operations:** CACQI requests support from the Office of Campus Climate to replace De Acker. CACQI has been without dedicated staff support over the AY2020-2021.
- **Staffing at the UC Merced Pride Center.** The Center is currently absent leadership after the departure of Angi Baxter. Currently, there is only one student working on programming.
 - **The lack of a coordinator for the Pride Center is a major concern for our students and campus community.** It is essential for our student body to have support, particularly for LGBTQ+ students who are in particular need of community and advocacy. See campus climate issues as presented in the [CACQI AY2017-2018 report](#).
 - **The lack of workshops available for students, faculty, and staff with this absence is also a major concern.** In particular, CACQI notes that both the Queer Ally Training and Gender Expansive Training series have been suspended over the pandemic. The lack of a Coordinator raises questions about who will maintain and support these programs, especially given that they have often been facilitated by student volunteers.¹

¹ For context: CACQI has never run these programs, but provided the annual funding for them until AY2019-2020 when then-new Associate Chancellor Dania Matos shifted the funding for these under the EDI Office.