Departmental History
The 2013-14 academic year brought an opportunity for change within the Women’s Resource Center (WRC) and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Resource Center (LGBT RC). With a new president and vice president in place, and with no success in hiring a permanent director of the WRC, an opportunity to combine the two centers was presented. After discussion with the vice president, assistant vice president, and director of the LGBT RC, a decision was made for the centers to undergo a departmental and philosophical merger. Staff brainstorming and input, analyzing of previous work, and gaining student, faculty, and staff feedback through interviews, a new mission was drafted in fall 2013. In the spring of 2014, it was decided that focus groups would be held in order to gain feedback about how to implement the new mission and reach the intended populations. Invitations were sent to collaborative partners across campus, student organizations who were previously connected to the center (i.e., Prism, Women’s Rights Alliance, Health Enhancement, Presidential Commissions-Sexual Orientation/Gender Identity and Women’s), as well as aspirational partners (i.e., Black Male Initiative, Athletics, Chance). Participants also had the opportunity to give feedback on four name choices as chosen by benchmarking from similar mergers across the country. In all, six focus group opportunities were facilitated by the Director and Graduate Assistant for LGBT Programs. Data was compiled and analyzed, resulting in the chosen name, Gender & Sexuality Resource Center (GSRC). Feedback was also received regarding what potential goals and programming could be.

The key functions of this new department will be to provide support to students around topics of gender and sexuality. This may include personal support and referral to other campus offices, involvement, leadership, internship, and educational opportunities and events. We will also work with campus partners to demonstrate the intersectional nature of gender and sexuality to both educate the campus and assist students in their development. Further, we will work with additional stakeholders in the local, regional, and national levels to best serve students, the department, division and university. Through a social justice lens, we will create a “home away from home” for all, while promoting an inclusive environment for all forms of masculinity, femininity, and sexual identity.

Mission & Goals
This mission statement, as noted above, became effective January 2014.

Mission Statement:
In alliance with the vision and mission of Northern Illinois University and the Division of Student Affairs & Enrollment Management, the Gender & Sexuality Resource Center acknowledges the historical impacts of women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or queer identities. We are a home away from home for all persons, inclusive of sexual and gender identities, and all forms of masculinity and femininity.

The Gender & Sexuality Resource Center serves as a central location for resources and support where acceptance of intersectional identities is encouraged and celebrated. Through student leadership development, advocacy, campus and academic engagement, and professional development opportunities, we collaborate with community, state, and national partners, alumni and other stakeholders to challenge societal constructs of gender and sexuality norms and promote social justice.

Department Goals:
At this time, the GSRC does not have officially stated goals. In working though this assessment process, and as suggested by SAEM Planning & Assessment, we intend to develop up to four departmental goals.
Assessments by Goal

*Per the SAEM Assessment Strategy Grid and process, the LGBT Resource Center and Women’s Resource Center developed annual planning priorities based on student-centered initiatives, leadership, center resource and opportunity enhancements, and engagement of faculty, collaborative partners, alumni, and community/national partners between FY10 and FY14. FY14 began the process toward becoming the Gender & Sexuality Resource Center, so I will focus on that planning year, which reflects the type of engagement we aim to continue and improve, guided by planning and assessment in the future. The department goals listed are based on interview and focus group suggestion, guided by NIU SAEM partner comparable practice. They may not be the final department goals, but they will be close and serve as a guide here.*

**DEPARTMENT GOAL 1:** Collaborate with key stakeholders to provide high impact opportunities for students and the campus community [around gender & sexuality topics].

**FY14**

Annual Priority: Conduct a needs assessment as part of the LGBT Resource Center merger with the Women’s Resource Center

Method: Needs Assessment and Focus group

Target:

Target 1: The results of the mission review and CAS will provide at least five suggestions/areas to focus needs assessment questions. Target 2: After completing the needs assessment data from our stakeholder focus groups, at least two new mission components will be added (or changed/adapted), which will guide the practice of the new center.

Results: A new mission statement was developed through utilizing each center’s previous mission statement, interviews with stakeholders from each center, and extensive staff discussion and reflection in Fall 2014. The mission feedback and review of relevant documentation (mission statements, CAS standards, meeting with Planning & Assessment) led into developing focus group questions and process. We felt our mission was solid and did not receive feedback that indicated new elements were needed; however, a new Center name was chosen based on four options focus group members chose from (these were gathered by benchmarking other institutions who had similar centers, and/or who had undergone similar mergers). The mission and focus group process, along with staff being involved at each step was comprehensive and allowed for a high level of campus input through the merger process.

Use of Results: This process allowed us to truly be informed about what our stakeholders, especially students wanted from this new center. The mission is living reminder of this feedback. Further, the new department name was informed by this process.

**DEPARTMENT GOAL 2:** Provide services and events for personal and professional development.

**FY14**

Annual Priority: Develop an online transgender resource guide, “Trans* @ NIU”

Method: Survey/Questionnaire, Interviews and Needs Assessment

Target:

Target 1: From the needs assessment, participants will identify at least 5 on campus resources for transgender/gender non-conforming students that contribute to their utilization of campus offices, resources, and support services. Target 2: At the end of Spring Semester, at least 80% of Transitions group members interviewed will indicate that the resources on the Trans at NIU guide are helpful in their use of campus offices, resources, and support services.

Results: The intention of the guide has been to be an evolving document, so since the guide launched, students have been able to utilize its information and give feedback about what should
be added or edited. Because of our center’s connection to the “Transitions” group for transgender and gender non-conforming students, they were able to provide regular feedback to help shape the effectiveness of this document, which added to its usefulness. Assisting with professor/faculty conversations, navigating health-related resources (such as Health Services and student health insurance coverage) seemed to be the highest need. Collaborative partners such as Student’s Legal Services was critical in helping form documents, and their willingness to provide ongoing support was also helpful. Our responses from participants trickled in through feedback given to the Transitions coordinator and shared to the director after weekly meetings. While 100% of Transitions members indicated the guide was helpful; some had suggestions for more resources, and others did not indicate any additional suggestions.

Use of Results: While this example is online, the process of creating it was multi-faceted and involved research of best practices, involving students in writing content, determining needs based on student experiences, and working with campus partners to provide the most accurate, useful and local resources and information. This resource continues to be a best practice and shared example locally, regionally and nationally.

DEPARTMENT GOAL 3: Involve alumni, community, and other stakeholders in outreach [mission implementation?] and career development opportunities.

FY12
Annual Priority: Identify Alternate/Supplemental Funding Sources [Resulting in establishment of Annual Alumni Panel]
Method: Resource Analysis, External Review Recommendations
Target: Using External Review recommendations and expertise of the SAEM Development officer, at least two (2) potential donor initial meetings will be conducted to yield alternative funding source(s).
Results: As we continue to build our network of alums and reach out, we aim to build on the success of the Alumni Panel, while also cultivating our three potential prospects. Meetings with prospects will come later, when the director and SAEM Development Officer feel they are ready to meet.

Use of Results: While we did not yet accomplish our goal of additional funding resources, this priority yielded a strong opportunity for alumni and students to interact in a meaningful way through the panel. Further, in collaboration with the Presidential Commission on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, Prism, and the NIU Alumni Association, we established a LGBTQA Homecoming Tailgate, providing an additional opportunity to bring many alums back to campus to engage in the work we do.

FY13
Annual Priority: Develop a LGBT Ally Program for NIU Athletics.
Method: Program Evaluation, Benchmarking
Target: Target 1: At least 20 Athletics staff and/or will take part in training during FY13. Target 2: At the end of training, participants will list 2 ways the training has increased their understanding of LGBTQ identity.
Results: In total, 60 staff, trainers, and coaches as well as 40 student athletes participated in training. Several ways of how the training increased participants’ understanding were indicated on the evaluation. We did not find any formalized, publicized Ally-type trainings specifically for athletic departments, so benchmarking was not an effective method for this project.

Use of Results: The connection with NIU Intercollegiate Athletics remains. Since, the NCAA and the MAC conference have released more LGBTQ-inclusive policies, and the Gender & Sexuality
Resource Center continues to collaborate with this department, most recently in a professional development seminar on gender inclusion and Title IX. Initial conversations on making this program a consistent offering in the department have occurred.

**Other Evidence by Goal**

**FY13**

**Priority/Service:** Ally Training Program  
*This educational program is well-established on campus; this year, we added additional trainers and enhanced content. The data reflect a positive reaction to this.*

**Method:** Program Evaluation  
**Target:** No official target; likert scale on evaluation.  
**Results:** With an 82% Response Rate, we found for:
- Increased Understanding about LGBTQ Identity, 96% (N=145) indicated “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”
- Gave Ideas for Ally Actions 99% (N=150) indicated “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”
- Overall Quality of Training Content 98.4% (N=149.5) indicated “Agree or Strongly Agree”

**Use of Results:** This year, the Ally Program increased by 168 Allies, (300 to 468), an increase of 56%. With the addition of more trainers, and qualitative feedback of some more experienced Ally Program training participants indicating a desire for more knowledge, we aim to pilot the addition of concepts like intersectional identities into the general Ally Training as well as offering more sessions, specialized in in-depth learning about topics like Transgender identity. As these are implemented, our evaluations will reflect the content. In FY15, we began implementation of Trans* Ally Training.

**FY14**

**Priority/Service:** Clothing Expo  
*Established in Fall 2012, this event offers free gently used professional clothing, aligned*  
**Method:** Tracking  
**Target:** (Unassessed) Contribute to student career success and financial sustainability  
**Results:** Attendance to this event, held each semester, averages about 150+ students  
**Use of Results:** As this program continues to grow, we have established a connection with Career Services to co-facilitate “Dress for Success,” an educational program inclusive of gender and sexual identities for professional dress in the workplace; we are also working with the new card reader system to have more assessment opportunities and options.

**Recruitment & Retention Efforts**

The Gender & Sexuality Resource Center has continued efforts by the LGBT & Women’s Resource Centers to recruit and retain students, and expanded efforts as possible. Overall, we demonstrate our value to the university in participating in NIU’s Open House, Transfer Open House, and other prominent recruiting events. We and educate participants on the available resources to assist women, men and LGBTQ+ people to persist to graduation. We contribute to retention through support and advocacy of current students though personal assistance meetings and connecting them with individuals and resources tailored to their needs.
Specific recruitment efforts have included participation in a Midwest region LGBTQ+ students and families college admissions fair (collaboration with the Admissions Office), attending and presenting in community middle and high school presentations. These efforts have allowed us to interact with students and families while showing the diversity of gender and sexuality at NIU to outside individuals.

Retention efforts include taking extra time to meet with students and connect them with center and campus resources. Our student employment positions, internships for academic credit, student organizations aligned with our center, scholarship, Lavender Graduation ceremony, Ally and Trans* Ally Programs, Clothing Expo, and social and educational events provide students with the opportunity to see themselves persisting at NIU with support, through the lens of their gender and/or sexuality. Our physical space allows students to feel at home. Further, we have key events that involve alumni interactions with students so they can learn from the experience of how alums with related identities have succeeded after NIU. Our best indicators of retention/recruitment is students who continue to stay involved with our center, complete internships and graduate (100% of our interns have graduated), and verbal feedback in general and at Lavender Graduation of the impact our center has had on their persistence.

We will build on the success of our recruitment and retention events, as we gather feedback from our events and educational opportunities for students. Moving forward, we will look at how new efforts (including the LGBTQ+ residence hall living learning community planned for FY16) can further enhance our contributions to overall recruitment and retention of students.

**Further Information Needed & Timeline**

As we move into carrying out our new mission and new goals to be set, we will better understand how our vision of being inclusive of all gender and sexual identities is actually occurring, how well we are challenging society concepts of masculinity and femininity, and the impact we have on educating the campus community, as well as our role in the recruitment, retention and persistence of students in our charge. Further, as we add a new concept to our center, delving into masculinity and men’s identity development, it will be critical that we assess how well we are doing this, and the best ways to go about doing this. Implementation and assessment began in a pilot stages in FY15, and will roll out further in FY16.