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Senior Project Proposal

Project Summary

Create an open and welcoming environment to discuss topics related to sexual health and behavior through the use of a week long lecture series, workshops, and the distribution of sexual education curriculum to freshmen University 101 classes.

Target Community

The target community is primarily the undergraduate students of Mercer University. The week long lecture series and accompanying workshops will be focused for all years of undergraduate students, while the sexual education curriculum will generally be targeted towards freshmen students. Potential co sponsors for the lecture series include Common Ground and Shape. Common Ground sponsored a question panel for this past year of lectures, and could potentially contribute a larger amount to the lecture series and workshops.

Project Relevance and Rationale

The main reason for the development of this project was the unequal education of sexual topics across the United States. Sexual education can be defined as “the provision of information about bodily development, sex, sexuality, and relationships” as well as “skill-building to help young people communicate about and make informed decisions regarding sex and their sexual health” (Bridges and Hauser 2014). There is no standardized curriculum taught to school students, so this project hopes to alleviate some of the issues this may cause. Freshmen students, despite their varying levels of sexual education, are still facing a new environment with living on a college campus and will experience many situations previously unknown to them. With the development of this curriculum, there will now be comprehensive information made available to freshmen students who may not have received a comprehensive sexual education in high school.

This project, previously done by Ansleigh Seaver and Natalie Wharton, will be in its second year when it is implemented in the fall. This project includes a week long series of lectures about various topics surrounding sexual health and behavior. One lecturer was an OB/GYN named Dr. Harper who discussed sexual health and different methods of contraception. The second night was a student sexuality panel sponsored by Common Ground. This panel included a variety of students of different sexual orientations that answered anonymous questions from the audience. The third night, a female licensed sex therapist Courtney Geter talked about sexual communication. The last night, a male licensed sex therapist Mike Prevetie spoke about the myths and facts about male sexuality. All throughout the week, there were

also table games on Cruz Plaza during the lunch hours. Students had the chance to answer trivia questions about sexual health and behavior in order to earn prizes and candy.

The week long lecture series targeted at undergraduate students was developed with the intention to create an open environment on Mercer's campus surround topics of sexual health and behavior. These topics are always seen as taboo and many may not feel comfortable discussing them. The lectures will continue in order to continue to foster open conversations in order to break this taboo. The development of a comprehensive sexual education curriculum to be distributed to University 101 classes will also foster conversations as well as allowing students to receive a standardized sexual education and list of resources available to them on Mercer's campus.

Sexual education and health are important subjects, and there needs to be a standard taught to all students, and an environment to talk about subjects that may have never been discussed before. A recent New York Times article there is a need for the lectures surrounding consent and sexual behaviors on college campuses, but that there is often a disconnect between how the information is presented and what the information consists of with what college students need and respond to. College students are understanding that consent is important, but school administrators are often not giving them the language and knowledge needed to communicate with their peers (Marran-Badan 2017). The intention is that this project will continue to be an annual lecture series and that the new addition of a sexual education curriculum can also be continued annually.

Project Objectives

This project hopes to accomplish a variety of goals. In regards to the sexual education curriculum, this project hopes to develop the sexual education curriculum itself by the Fall semester of 2018. This curriculum will be taught to 3-5 University 101 classes for this first year that we are piloting the curriculum, and then in subsequent years, the number of classes shall increase. A pre test and posttest of general knowledge of sexual education can be used to measure the short-term effectiveness of this aspect.

For the weeklong lecture series, this project hopes to increase the diversity of the speakers with the inclusion of African American lecturers. Another goal of the lecture series is to increase the number of students that come to more than one lecture. The goal is for seventy-five percent of students that come to the series to go to three or more lectures throughout the week. A pre and posttest survey can be taken by those who went to the lecture series to determine if the general attitude around the topics has improved and if those who attended the lectures learned something new.

Implementation Plan

The plan for this project is to start working on the research, logistics, and partnerships of the project in the upcoming semester. The project will contact the leader of Common Ground and Shape to initiate partnerships or sponsorships. Finding a partner to help complete the project will be one of the first challenges the project has to overcome, but hopefully one of these organizations will have an interested leader the project can partner with. Over the next semester and summer,

the project will research curriculum for the sexual education of University 101 classes. To gain permission to pilot this sexual education curriculum in these classes, the project will need to contact the Assistant Director of New Student Programs, Amanda Carls. It may be a challenge to get the university to agree to let the project teach a comprehensive sexual education seminar to freshman students. Perhaps an opt-in situation for the classes can be established. Before the project meets with her, however, the project would like to have a more developed curriculum created in order to demonstrate what topics will be covered. Research and development will continue, as well as organization of the logistics of the weeklong series of lectures. Speaking to the university (the Provost) to allow this event to happen again will be another hurdle to overcome, but using the data from this past year's project should help my case. In the fall of next year, the curriculum will be completed, surveys will have been distributed, and lecturers will be scheduled to speak. The middle of the fall should be when the lectures occur, while the education seminars in the classes may continue throughout the whole semester, depending on interest.

Surveys and pre and posttests will be used to evaluate the goals of this project. In addition, this data will also be compared with the surveys completed by the previous years surveys.

Funding	Description
Sexual Education Curriculum - \$150	\$100 to purchase an existing curriculum \$50 to print necessary elements of curriculum
Advertising - \$150	\$75 supplies to make a banner \$75 for targeted advertisements on Facebook and Instagram
Lecturers - \$200	\$50 Amazon gift cards for all lecturers
T shirts - \$200	T shirts for students that show up to lectures at the end of the week
Wrist bands and candy - \$100	Candy for participants and wrist bands to track students
Total Cost - \$800	

Project Timeline

Time Frame	Description
February 2018	Contact president of Common Ground to determine partnership; research to develop curriculum; contact Director of New Student Programs, research possible lecturers, begin IRB process
March 2018	Continue research; locate areas for funding; contact possible lecturers
April, May, June, July 2018	Create curriculum, organize logistics of project
August 2018	Completion of curriculum; distribution of surveys to undergraduate students, contact reservations for location
September 2018	Contact lecturers; find a week for the lecture series to occur; confirm reservations for location; begin advertising event
October 2018	Have weeklong lecture series; start conducting curriculum in UNV 101 classes; once week is over distribute surveys; once curriculum is over, distribute surveys
November 2018	Collect all data from surveys; analyze; distribute results

Evaluation and Dissemination

Measuring the impact for this project will be somewhat difficult, as it can be hard to gauge whether or not someone learned something or if they feel more open to talking about a subject. However, some measurements can be taken and this will help to interpret and evaluate the success of this project.

For the sexual education curriculum, the evaluation of this aspect will most likely be survey based. The project will distribute a pre-curriculum survey to ask students what level of education they have received, as well as some general sexual

education knowledge questions. There will then be some opinion questions about whether or not they feel comfortable talking about certain subjects on campus or with their friends and peers, and then if they know where they can access services on campus regarding their sexual health and behavior. Then, after the curriculum is taught, a post curriculum survey will be given to ascertain the answers to similar questions as those asked on the pre test.

For the weeklong lecture series, the project will send a general survey out to the Mercer undergraduate students to gauge interest in the weeklong lecture series. There will also be a section of the survey to ask students what subjects they would like to be included in the lecture series. During the week of the lectures, the number of students that attend each lecture will be counted. Another count will be taken of students who attend multiple lectures throughout this week, which will be done through the use of stamping wristbands (like was done this past year) and counting those who return for multiple lectures.

IRB approval can be obtained for these surveys and for future research purposes.

Sources

Bridges, E. and Hauser, D. (2014). *Sexuality Education*. [online]

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Marran-Badan, A. (2017). College Students Want to Talk About Sex. They Just Don't

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<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/26/opinion/college-students-consent-sex-ed.html>