

Queer Cafe

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Background & Summary

According to the American College Health Association's National College Health Assessment, more than 20% of college students in the United States identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual, pansexual, queer, or questioning, and around 4% as transgender or gender-nonconforming (or collectively, LGBTQ+) in Spring 2021.¹



Although we do not have data about this group of students for UNCG, by the American College Health Association's statistic above and with 18, 246 total students enrolled in Spring 2021, UNCG's LGBTQ+ student population may have been larger than each school/college other than the College of Arts and Sciences.²

LGBTQ+ students experience higher barriers to academic success³ and can experience discrimination and feel isolated and otherwise unwelcome and unsafe on campus, including at the library, where their access to information is hindered. Interventions that aim to improve campus climate and provide direct nonacademic support are important for creating a safe and inclusive environment, one of the goals of the University Libraries.⁴ Such interventions may take the form of social events like Adrianna Martinez's temporary dedicated space for LGBTQ+ students at the New York Institute of Technology for National Coming Out Day.⁵

¹ [ACHA National College Health Assessment Spring 2021 Reference Group Executive Summary](#)

² [UNCG Spring 2021 Enrollment Dashboard](#)

³ [Barriers to Higher Education](#)

⁴ [Mission Statement > The University of North Carolina at Greensboro \(UNCG\)](#)

⁵ [The Quiet Solidarity of National Coming Out Day Through Queer Storytelling and Coffee](#)

In the Fall of 2019, a group of librarians at UNCG University Libraries adapted Martinez's idea of a temporary dedicated space and implemented our own "Queer Cafe" event, with the goal of promoting visibility of LGBTQ+ library staff to students who share similar experiences through creation of a safe space for socializing and sharing of campus and library resources and activities.^{6,7} The event was a success, with 11 students and 10 library staff attending and positive verbal feedback affirming the impact such social events can have in encouraging engagement with the library and fostering an inclusive and welcoming environment for students. Since the pilot program in Fall 2019, the librarians involved have been planning a new Queer Cafe project that builds on the success and lessons learned from the first event, but unfortunately, COVID-19 made in-person gatherings impossible in 2020. Now that we are back on campus, we want to host this event again keeping COVID guidelines in mind.

With this grant, we would like to create a safe environment that promotes inclusivity and community through the experiences shared by LGBTQ+ students and library staff. In order for us to host this event safely, we intend to reserve a room in the EUC that can accommodate 20-30 attendees and still allow for social distancing. The proposed \$490 will be used for space reservation fees, outreach, campus catering, materials for activities, and swag.

Outcomes

Through this two-hour, in-person event, we will increase a sense of belonging and community among LGBTQ+ students by promoting visibility of LGBTQ+ library staff and other students who share similar experiences, and promote mental and social well-being through acknowledgement and affirmation of identity, conversation, creative activities, and sharing of resources.

Budget

- \$30 - Space: chairs, tables, and other fees (\$30)
- \$50 - Outreach materials: 1 large poster for display case from TRC (\$35); 20-30 flyers via campus printing (\$15)
- \$200 - Spartan Catering: 1 gallon of coffee (\$17), 1 gallon of hot water and tea (\$17), 1 gallon of hot chocolate (\$17), 25 water bottles (\$30), 2 dozen danishes (\$27), 2 dozen mini muffins (\$17), 2 dozen individually wrapped granola bars (\$23), compostables and other (\$52)
- \$145 - Activity materials: 250 count pinback button maker set (\$30); stickers, paper, and other craft supplies (\$50); 2-3 games/board games (\$65)

⁶ [Queer Cafe: Putting on LGBTQ+ Inclusive & Supportive Events \(slideshow report\)](#)

⁷ [Klein and Rood - Pass the button maker - ACRL 2021.pdf \(poster\)](#)

- \$65 - Swag: 35 event-branded keychains from UNCG SELF studio (\$20); 35 UNCG-branded colored pencils or other similar swag as available (\$45)

Plan for Evaluation

We want to keep students and staff who attend this event safe and protect their privacy as members of vulnerable communities. To this end, we will assess this event by how many people attend, rather than who attends. To satisfy university data collection recommendations, we will have a card swipe reader available, but will prioritize an anonymous sign-in option to count the number of attendees and whether they are students or staff.

We will also implement an exit assessment via anonymous form, to collect feedback on activities, catering, and outreach, and assess the overall impact on students' sense of belonging and community and their connections across campus.