

Introduction

This document represents a Five-Year Strategic Plan for the National Consortium of Directors of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Resources in Higher Education¹ (hereafter referred to as the Consortium). In June 2003, an ad-hoc committee was struck and charged to review the current structure of the consortium and provide suggestions regarding the future direction of the Consortium. Over the next several months the committee deliberated the many issues facing the Consortium, thought with detail and clarity about the future needs of the group, and worked to create this document. The ad-hoc committee presented the initial proposal to the Consortium for discussion on November 4, 2003. Recommended revisions were incorporated and the document was voted on and accepted on Wednesday November 5, 2003.

Highlights of Key Points

The following are some of the core issues that the ad-hoc committee addressed in this plan. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list, just to provide a sense of what we felt given recent discussions were the concerns of Consortium members.

- Recognize the changes that the Consortium has gone through in its first few years including size, membership, leadership, etc.
- Build on our current structure....a consortium that has more opportunities for involvement and a more lateral leadership structure. For example, a larger number of smaller working groups that are focused on a certain task and have a defined timeline for completion of the task.
- The need for the Consortium to be proactive in creating programs that will help build resources for LGBT people on campus and do so in a manner that limits duplication of efforts.
- To build stronger visibility for the Consortium.
- To create a stronger and more accountable internal and external communications system/mechanism for the Consortium.
- Provide a plan that offers a vision for the future of the Consortium, yet is created with enough flexibility to be revised to fit changing needs or circumstances.

¹ This strategic plan uses the terms lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender when referring to sexual orientation/gender identity/gender expression. This language is employed with the understanding that many individuals identified as LGBT may choose to use other self-identifying terms or none at all. Recent research (Rankin, 2003) suggests that not all respondents wanted to place themselves in LGBT boxes. Many would prefer choices such as "same-gender loving," "gender-queer," "pansexual," "queer," "woman-loving-woman," etc. Some considered the "gay," "lesbian," "bisexual," and "transgender" categories to be predominately white social constructs of identity, and therefore not relevant to their personal experiences. The author of this plan chooses to identify as "queer," not as a label, a camp, or a statement but as a means of confronting and disrupting the static notions of gender and sexuality. The term "queer" allows her to not conform to any discrete categorization of sexuality. However, "queer" was overwhelmingly not the self-identity choice of black LGBT people who participated in another recent research project; in fact, most chose gay or lesbian. In addition, as mentioned, there are many other labels that individuals choose. The Consortium recognizes the personal and political import of language and the need to recognize a broad range of self-identity choices.

Therefore, this plan covers a period of five years.

- Benchmarks will be established to help gauge the success of our ideas and to help monitor the timeliness of our activity.
- An automatic check-in on activity, benchmarks and recommendations for adjustments will be completed at the two-year mark.
- A formal review of our goals, our success in achieving them, our projections for “still-to-come” activities and the beginning of a new planning process will begin in year four.

Vision (the philosophy of the Consortium)

To critically transform higher education environments so that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students, faculty, administrators, staff, and alumni/ae have equity in every respect.

Goals (How we move toward the vision of the coalition)

Action Plans (what steps we take to achieve the goals; primarily achieved through the Working Groups)

- Goal 1.** To provide support to colleagues serving lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities in higher education

Action Plans

Examples:

1. Welcome to new members (Publications & Communications)
2. Mentoring Program (Support Services)
3. Active Recruitment of new members (Structure & Process)

- Goal 2.** To consult with higher education administrators in the interest of improving campus climate and services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender faculty, staff, students, administrators, and alumni/ae.

Action Plans

Examples:

1. Development of Consortium brochure (Publications & Communications)
2. Visible presence of Consortium at appropriate higher education conferences (Executive Board)
3. Maintaining & expanding the web site (Publications & Communications)

- Goal 3.** To advocate for institutional policy changes and program development that recognize the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people.

Action Plans

Examples:

1. Assisting in the development of campus resources (Executive Board)
2. Responding to current LGBT issues and concerns in higher education (All Working Groups)
3. Institutionalization of LGBT issues on campus via the creation of an office/center devoted solely to these issues (Support Services)

Structure and Governance of the Consortium

It is our intent to create a consortium that can:

- Ensure the continuing viability and growth of the Consortium
 - Facilitate accountability and communication between the Executive Board and the membership
 - Provide opportunities for leadership development while reflecting the diversity of the LGBT community
 - Effectively support Consortium projects
 - Increase the visibility and identity of the Consortium
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Name

The name of the group is National Consortium of Directors of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Resources in Higher Education (hereafter referred to as the Consortium).

Vision

To critically transform higher education environments so that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students, faculty, administrators, staff, and alumni/ae have equity in every respect.

Membership

Membership Requirements

Membership in the Consortium shall be available to any person who supports the mission of the Consortium and who has completed an application for membership.²

Membership Decision

Any decision to accept or reject an application of membership by the Executive Board may be appealed to the full membership at the annual meeting. The full membership shall have the authority to override the decision by the Executive Board to reject membership by majority vote.

No individual shall be denied membership to the Consortium if they fulfill membership requirements.³

² Membership applications are reviewed by the Structure & Process Committee.

³ Equal Opportunity Clause – The Consortium welcomes and encourages participation from all individuals and values all diversity including, but not limited to that of race, color, nationality, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, appearance, age, religion, class, ethnic origin, or ability. Membership into the Consortium does not indicate the sexual orientation/gender identity of the member.

Membership Rights and Responsibilities

All members shall act in accordance with all published policies and guidelines of the Consortium which shall include but not be limited to the following:

- a. Members are requested to attend as often as possible all scheduled meetings of the full membership.
- b. Members shall be respectful of the rights of all other members consent to the ***Agreements of Consortium Membership*** (see attached description).
- c. Each member is granted one vote on any matter that comes before a meeting of the full membership of the Consortium.
- d. Members may designate a substitute for any meeting and that substitute may vote in the member's place.
- e. Any member deemed by the Executive Board to be acting in a way that jeopardizes the mission of the Coalition may have their membership revoked by rules of modified consensus.
 1. Any member whose membership has been revoked will receive written notification from the Executive Board. Upon receipt of such notification, all rights and privileges of membership in the Consortium shall be considered suspended.
 2. Membership revocation decisions by the Executive Board may be appealed at a general membership meeting. The full membership shall have the authority to override the decision by the Executive Board to revoke membership by majority vote.

Membership Dues

Membership dues are determined according to a sliding scale (low of \$25.00 to a high of \$150.00) based upon the institutional and/or individual member situation.⁴

⁴ Recommendation for Structure & Process Working Group regarding the application for membership dues is to include that historically institutions with established centers remitted the maximum dues.

Meetings

Annual Consortium Membership Meetings

To be held on the day prior to the pre-conference workshops with the possibility of additional meetings at the NGLTF Creating Change Conference in the fall of each year

Proposed agenda*:

- I. State-of-Consortium Reports (including Working Group Chair reports, outside entity representative reports, etc.)
- II. Meeting of Working Groups
Provide time to share strategies and develop actions
- III. Leadership Training
Have workshop on some leadership skill (e.g. conflict resolution, grant writing, media, etc.)
- IV. Planning for next meeting
Executive Board plans each meeting in collaboration with a member institution close to the site (e.g. plan agenda, decide on training, etc.)
- VI. Other Consortium Business
Voting of new Board would take place during this time

***Optional:** Dinner or other special “social” event planned for group

Annual Consortium Spring Gatherings

To be held in connection with ACPA and NASPA conferences

No Consortium business will take place at these events, but may be used as time for networking with colleagues.

Monthly Executive Board Conference Calls – (aim for 1 hour in length)

- Request for agenda items forwarded to Executive Board Recorder one week prior to meeting.
- Agenda forwarded by Recorder to Executive Board at least 24 hours prior to the call.
- Minutes from the meeting forwarded to the Consortium membership no later than one week following the meeting.
- Chair/Co-chairs facilitate conference call meetings
- Conference calls paid for via Consortium budget (unless they can be absorbed by Executive Board member's budgets)

Proposed agenda:

- I. Old Business
 - A. Approval of previous meeting minutes
 - B. State of the Consortium Report

- II. Executive Board Reports
 - A. Chair(s) report
 - B. Recorder report
 - C. Treasurer report

- III. Working Group Project Updates
 - A. Publications & Communications
 - B. Support Services
 - C. Education, Outreach, & Advocacy
 - D. Structure & Process

- V. New Business

- VI. Other Business

The Executive Board is the governing body of the Consortium, though any of its actions can be superceded by the general membership. Individuals elected shall be persons interested in and willing to contribute to advancing the mission of the Consortium. In conducting elections, members shall be reminded that the Consortium is committed to inclusion of all in leadership roles (e.g. transgender, same-gender loving, people of color, two-spirit, those with limited economic resources, etc.).

The Executive Board shall consist of the following individuals:

- a. Past-Chair(s)
- b. The Chair(s),
- c. The Chair(s)-elect,
- d. The Recorder,
- e. The Treasurer,
- f. The chairs of each of the working groups

Duties of the Executive Board

The Executive Board shall coordinate the activities of the Consortium and it shall exercise budgetary responsibility for the Consortium. No individual member shall take any action on behalf of the Consortium unless specifically delegated to do so by the Executive Board, acting on behalf of the full membership. The Executive Board is empowered to establish additional positions on the Board based on needs for specific skills and abilities. All policy decisions and major expenditures of funds must be approved by the Executive Board.

Voting

- a. The Executive Board will operate under modified consensus (see Appendix B).
- b. All meetings of the Executive Board shall have a quorum of three people or 25% of the current membership of the Board whichever is greater in order to conduct business.
- c. No one person may carry more than one vote
- d. Executive Board members may designate a substitute for any meeting and that substitute may vote in the member's place.
- e. No proxy votes are allowed.
- f. The Executive Board may vote by telephone or by electronic mail.

Vacancies in Executive Board

- a. Vacancies between terms will be filled on an interim basis by the Executive Board in consultation with the full membership.

Elections

Annual Membership Meeting (November – in connection with NGLTF Creating Change)

Notice of elections of Executive Board members shall be given to the general membership 30 days prior to the annual meeting.

Voting Procedure

Elections of Executive Board members will normally be by secret ballot and shall be conducted at the annual membership meeting as follows:

- a. All members will be given a chance to submit nominations for the Chair(s)-elect, Recorder, Treasurer, and Working Group Chairs.
- b. A ballot will be distributed to all voting members. Individuals who receive a majority of the votes will be selected. In the event that an individual gets a majority of the votes for more than one position, that individual will assume the position for which she/he received the most votes.

Working Groups

Education, Outreach, & Advocacy

The Education, Outreach, and Advocacy Working Group is responsible for the overall education and outreach strategies including creating and disseminating information regarding lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender issues and concerns to members of the Consortium. This group will also address concerns of internal to the Consortium and external (e.g. CAS, ACPA, NASPA, etc.) assessment.

Publications and Communications

The Publications and Communications Working Group is responsible for developing an overall publications strategy including creating a visibility plan for the Consortium (e.g. Consortium brochure, Consortium display board for conferences), writing press releases, developing talking points in conjunction with other committees, and coordinating media communication as it relates to the Consortium. This working group would also be responsible for maintaining the web page and listservs.

Structure, Process, and Membership

The Structure and Process Working Group is responsible for developing the structure of the Consortium. This working group answers the questions of why we exist, how we will accomplish our goals, and will generally oversee the process of measuring the Consortium's progress. This working group is also responsible for maintaining current membership lists and identifying and securing new members and the revision of the membership application form.

Support Services

The Support Services Working Group is responsible for developing strategies to support the members of the Consortium. This working group would be responsible for updating the current FAQ's, developing new FAQ's and solicit experts to author them, coordinate the mentor program, coordinating the Campus Track at NGLTF, and developing/maintaining the speakers/consultants network.

APPENDIX A

Agreements of Consortium Membership⁵

I agree to support our Vision and Goals

I agree to make every effort to attend meetings

I agree to follow the agenda and group process and abide by the rules of modified consensus

I agree to speak when it is my turn/one person speaks at a time

I agree to preserve the safety and confidentiality of personal disclosures

I agree to communicate all information back to my institution in a timely fashion

I agree to keep a positive attitude

I agree to always keep the "Big Picture" in mind

I agree to respect the opinions of others

I agree that if I disagree, I will only disagree respectfully/constructively

I agree to resolve any differences within the confines and structure of the Consortium

I agree to focus on the issue, not on the person

I agree to assist all other participants to keep these agreements

⁵ Structure & Process Working Group will be charged with developing a Statement of Ethics for the Consortium.

APPENDIX B

Modified Consensus

1. All voting members who are present are identified.
2. Facilitator states the agenda item and asks for discussion. Discussion is limited to 10 minutes, unless extended by decision.
3. Speakers are recognized by the facilitator.
4. After 10 minutes (or if there are no more speakers before ten minutes has expired) the facilitator assesses the discussion and asks if anyone would block consensus on what seems to the facilitator to be the favored proposed decision. People who chose to block consensus, call out that they block. People who block do not need to wait for the facilitator to recognize them. If anyone calls out that they block consensus, they may not make any additional comments while blocking.
5. If zero or one person blocks consensus, then consensus has been reached.
6. If two or more people block consensus, the facilitator asks if anyone would block an additional 10 minutes of discussion.
 - a. If additional discussion is not blocked (zero or 1 person), after ten minutes the facilitator again asks if anyone blocks consensus on a proposed decision.
 - b. If additional discussion is blocked (2 or more people), then the facilitator can, if necessary, ask for one or two people from each side of an issue to summarize their positions. These speakers get 1 minute to speak.
7. When consensus is blocked and discussion is completed, voting members vote on the issue. To pass, a proposed decision must receive two-thirds of the votes of voting members in attendance.
8. If the proposed decision does not receive two-thirds of the votes then the facilitator asks if anyone would block tabling the issue.
 - a. If two or more people block tabling the issue, then a vote is immediately taken on tabling the issue. If two-thirds of the vote support stabling, then the issue is tabled and the next agenda item is considered.
 - b. If less than two-thirds support tabling, then discussion is reopened for 10 minutes and the process follows from step 4 above.

Discussion

Modified consensus is a decision making process that has had success for small and medium sized groups (10 -200 people). Implementation of modified consensus allows groups to avoid some of the negatives of Roberts Rules of Order.

The major complaint against Roberts Rules is the ability of the chair and the majority opinion to squash discussion and silence minority opinions. Using Roberts Rules invariably creates winners and losers regarding a decision. Additionally, Roberts Rules is a complex process and rarely are there even a few people in a group that know the rules, even though nearly everyone seems to believe they are experts in the process. Many initiatives by ad hoc committees or new organizations in the progressive movement do not have a parliamentarian on hand for their meetings.

Consensus building, when it is successful, achieves general agreement on a decision before a group. In the ideal, there are no losers. Organizations in the progressive movement use consensus to give respect to minority opinions and an opportunity for non-threatening discussions.

Consensus is very difficult to achieve, and attempts to satisfy everyone in a group can require lengthy frustrating discussions that have the effect of damaging the moral of a group to a degree that negates that success of creating consensus. When a controversial decision needs to be made, or when people are present just to block a decision, achieving consensus may be impossible.

To solve the problems associated with consensus building, some organizations have used, with success, a decision making process known as modified consensus. Modified consensus combines a consensus building process with a voting process to make decisions. The voting process is only used when consensus cannot be reached. Usually the group does not need to resort to a vote to make a decision. However, the larger the group, the more likely a decision will be made by a vote.