|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| . MSU-logo-2001 | REPORT*From the office of the…*Women and Gender Equity Network (WGEN) Coordinator |
| TO: | Members of the Executive Board |
| FROM: | Yimeng Wang  |
| SUBJECT: | WGEN Report 5 |
| DATE: | December 3, 2020 |

**Year Plan Update**

Since my previous report, there have not been many significant changes to my expectations of the remainder of the semester. While there are some key differences from my Year Plan, such as the scrapping of another campaign and the slight delay of our Trans(forming) Mac campaign, these are in line with my expectations since the Fall Semester has started. Many of the proposed activities for the months of November and December have or are still expected to take place, albeit with slightly modified timelines. These activities include: Trans(forming) Mac; exec check-ins; additional volunteer training opportunities; and an exam de-stressor.

There are no additional ideas that have emerged outside of my Year Plan that have not already been accounted for. Since the completion of Trans(forming) Mac, I have decided that the goals of the exec team should be moderate, as the campaign took a lot of work and time. As Fall Semester comes to a close, the main focuses of the service have been to address emerging exam-related needs and express appreciation for all the work that has been put into WGEN by execs and volunteers over the course of the semester.

**Service Usage**

We have seen an increase in access WGEN services, with 9 users accessing the WGEN Zoom space and 2 using the text-based chat. Of these users, 3 were completely new users to WGEN. There has also been use of breakout rooms during peer support hours. While this is a marked improvement from my last report, and might simply point to the longer period of time that WGEN has now been open, I am still concerned about the lack of access (both in terms of being disability-inclusive and also general non-intimidation). Some ideas for how to improve this are detailed throughout the rest of this report.

We also had significant engagement and turnout for our Trans(forming) Mac campaign. The chart below details the engagement with our promotional material. I have not included the daily posts about our events, although those also features a fair number of engagements and shares. I have also not included the increase in our page likes or follows. I have included one of our graphics at the bottom of this report.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Facebook**  | **Instagram**  |
| Trans(forming) Mac Launch  | 3,867 reached 304 engagements  | 383 reached 123 interactions |
| Trans(forming) Mac Event Page  | 151 reached15 engagements | n/a |
| Ongoing Projects Launch  | 203 reached 20 engagements  | 330 reached 70 interactions  |
| TDoR Statement  | 728 reached 35 engagements  | n/a |
| Trans COVID-19 Experiences Statement  | 323 reached 13 engagements  | 424 reached 80 interactions  |

In addition, I have included numbers regarding our programming sign-ups and actual turnout. As a quick note regarding the ongoing projects, we had 2 students request binders and 6 individuals leave pick-me-up messages for TDoR.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Sign Up**  | **Attendance**  |
| TDoR (Discord)  | 4 | 21 |
| inTRANSient (Discord) | 2 | 2 |
| Art While Apart (Zoom, Aggie.io) | 3 | 2 |
| U-Sing Our Voices (Zoom) | 7 | 6 |
| Chill Night In (Zoom) | 4 | 1 |
| Trans Inclusive Health Care (MS Live)  | 5 | 5 |
| Panel Discussion (MS Live)  | 10 | 10 |
| Transcendent Community Care (Zoom) | 5 | 2 |
| Reclaiming and Reframing Space (Discord)  | 4 | 4 |
| Trans Movement Workshop (Zoom)  | 4 | 4 |

**Past Events, Projects, & Activities**

The past period has been extremely eventful for WGEN. While the majority of our time was dedicated to Trans(forming) Mac, there were several other small activities that were completed as well.

In this period, I have (finally) completed an edit of the WGEN Coordinator Job Description. I have also submitted feedback on the WGEN service review questions, many which I had strong opinions towards. I helped organize and facilitate the first meeting for the PACBIC Gender & Sexuality working group, which went quite well. A proposal for the SHEC/WGEN online resources access program was created and shared with the Board of Directors.

My Promo Executive, Rijaa, also completed and launched the WGEN Instagram Takeover on November 16. Due to timeline restraints, all posts were released on the same day and we were unable to host a Live Q&A for the ‘end’ of the takeover. My Resources Coordiantor was able to take inventory of most of WGEN’s physical resources, which has been helpful in determining budget allocations.

The majority of this period was committed to planning and launching Trans(forming) Mac, our annual campaign dedicated to trans-focused programming for and about trans, Two-Spirit, non-binary, gender non-conforming, and all other folks who identify outside cisnormative understandings of gender. Trans(forming) Mac ran from November 20–25 and contained 10 events in total on platforms including Discord, Zoom, and MS Live. There was significant involvement from trans execs, research provided by the Events Committee, and a statement on trans experiences in COVID-19 drafted by my Social and Political Advocacy Coordinator. I am also pleased with the collaborative nature of Trans(forming) Mac this year — we worked with both the PCC and SHEC, as well as trans community members and organizations. While I would have liked to have included more Black, Indigenous, and racialized non-white trans folks to speak, I am extraordinarily pleased and grateful for the work of the trans women and non-bianry collaborator who were involved.

While our Trans(forming) Mac campaign usually runs the week leading up to Trans Day of Remembrance (November 20), we chose to hold it in the days following TDoR as to not coincide with the PCC’s History Week. Although the weekend events were quite successful, in the future efforts will be made to ensure that Trans(forming) Mac continues to precede TDoR.

**Upcoming Events, Projects & Activities**

Our first Community Care Group is scheduled to run for the first week of December. We have 4 interested individuals. Depending on how the first session goes, the facilitators will decide on the frequency and continuation of the group over December/Winter Semester.

On December 4, the December 6th Planning Committee will be launching our video series commemorating the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. The four videos will feature perspectives on gender-based and sexual violence, the École Polytechnique Massacre, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and anti-Black transphobia. The videos can be accessed here: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCT0baeJgsrg7f3VWlV875Dg/featured>.

The Events Team is also planning an exam time de-stressor event. Currently, the event is envisioned to be very low-commitment and potentially as simple as a space for students to work together. The Events Team has proposed using the WGEN Discord to facilitate this activity.

**Currently Working On**

My Volunteer Coordinator has been working on the WGEN Discord. Having worked on a few Discord servers for Trans(forming) Mac, I believe that I will be able to contribute more and finalize the Discord by the end of the semester. We will mostly likely be offering a training on how to use the Discord for volunteers before launching it for Winter Semester.

I am also interested in working on an infographic for students on what they can expect when they enter a peer support space. I think that this is long overdue, as intimidation of WGEN as a service/space has long been a challenge. I believe that this is heightened with the uncertainty of an online space and the use of Zoom currently for our platform.

My Volunteer Coordinator is also working on a volunteer social for the end of term. We are considering activities that may allow students to engage without sitting in front of their laptop.

I am working on scheduling optional end-of-term exec check-ins over the remaining few weeks of the semester. This will be an opportunity for execs to chat one-on-one around how they are feeling, what has or has not been working, and anything else related to their WGEN roles or themselves. I am also working on creating small tokens that I can physically send to execs for both the break and to demonstrate my appreciation of their commitment to the service.

I am working on various miscellaneous tasks as well, including editing my Volunteer Coordinator’s Job Description and consultations on MSU policies. As a co-convener for the PACBIC Gender & Sexuality working group, I am also working with others to determine a direction for the group this year. I am continuing to work on projects such as the SHEC/WGEN online resources access program, as well as smaller tasks such as reviewing the new WGEN website. I am working with Maccess to re-launch our Disability In Colour support group.

**Budget**

This period, a significant portion of the budget was spent on our annual Trans(forming) Mac campaign. We spent $732.50 to host 5 external speakers/facilitators: Erika Muse (activist), Jelena Vermilion (Sex Workers’ Action Program Hamilton), Autumn Getty (Kyle’s Place), Mela Swayze, and Clairandean (movement facilitators). Thanks to the hard work of Autumn, the speaker fees for Erika and Jelena were covered by Kyle’s Place. I also wanted to acknowledge the unpaid work offered by Sydney, the SHEC Coordinator, and WGEN’s Logistic Coordinator, Julia, who both also spoke at an event.

I have included in grey italics many of the planned materials I have dedicated part of the budget to in the upcoming weeks. These include: the SHEC/WGEN online resources access program (for menstrual and gender-affirming products); books for the WGEN Library and the Womanists’ book club (potentially purchased during Haymarket Books’ 40% off promotion); volunteer t-shirts, facilitated by the Underground; and WGEN stickers from the Underground, to be mailed to execs and volunteers.

I am also interested in exploring both asynchronous and synchronous external training opportunities over December/January.

Finally, I have been exploring the possibility of compensating my Volunteer Coordinator for her time and work in creating and offering WGEN Volunteer Training. The hours that she put in were unparalleled and extremely taxing, as I have noted in past reports, and considering that the ‘Training Expenses’ line will likely remain mostly untouched, I would be interested in ensuring that her extra work is compensated.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ***ACCOUNT CODE*** | ***ITEM*** | ***BUDGET / COST*** |
| 5003-0308 | OFFICE SUPPLIES |  |
|  |  |  |
|  | TOTAL SPENT IN LINE* LibraryCat subscription
* *Menstrual products*
 | $36.00*$TBD* |
|   | REMAINING IN LINE | $63.00 |
| 6102-0308 | ANNUAL CAMPAIGNS |  |
|  |  |  |
|   | TOTAL SPENT IN LINE* **Trans(forming) Mac speakers**
 | **$732.50** |
|   | REMAINING IN LINE | $2,067.50 |
| 6104-0308 | WOMANISTS |  |
|  |  |  |
|  | TOTAL SPENT IN LINE* *Books on gender-based violence and racial justice (Haymarket)*
 | *$TBD* |
|   | REMAINING IN LINE | $250.00 |
| 6103-0308 | SPECIAL PROJECTS |  |
|  | * Financial Advocacy – Black Women in Motion
* **Gender-affirming products project**
* *Gender-affirming products access project con’t*
 | $50.00**$110.54***$TBD* |
|  | TOTAL SPENT IN LINE | $160.54 |
|   | REMAINING IN LINE | $589.46 |
| 6494-0308 | VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION |  |
|  |  |  |
|  | TOTAL SPENT IN LINE* *Volunteer t-shirts*
* *Mailing*
 | *$TBD* |
|   | REMAINING IN LINE | $750.00 |
| 6501-0308 | ADVERTISING & PROMOTION |  |
|  | * Community Care Groups Promo
* Trans(forming) Mac Promo
* *Stickers*
 | $75.00$150.00*$TBD* |
|   | TOTAL SPENT IN LINE | $225.00 |
|   | REMAINING IN LINE | $1,775.00 |
| 6804-0308 | TRAINING EXPENSES |  |
|  |  |  |
|  | TOTAL SPENT IN LINE | $0.00 |
|   | REMAINING IN LINE | $500.00 |
| ***TOTALS*** |
| **TOTAL BUDGETED DISCRETIONARY SPENDING**  | $7,150.00 |
| **TOTAL ACTUAL DISCRETIONARY SPENDING**  | $1,154.04 |
| **REMAINING DISCRETIONARY SPENDING**  | $5,995.96 |

**Volunteers**

There have been a few struggles in navigating exec correspondences, especially when dealing with time sensitive topics such as promotions. I have experienced a few instances where execs are not extremely diligent about checking and responding to their MSU email accounts, which has led to significant delays in our projects. However, I have also had the opposite experience on many occasions, which I am deeply grateful for, especially since navigating different accounts can be difficult and emails can be a source of distress.

My Volunteer Coordinator has not expressed significant concern over managing Safe(r) Space volunteers, nor has the Events Team expressed concerns over the Events Committee volunteers. I have also not had any volunteers reach out to me personally with comments or concerns. I hope that this is a good sign!

The WGEN Zoom space has been running more consistently since the first week. The most significant recurring challenge has been when the Zoom space accidentally closes and volunteers on the next shift are unable to open the space. My Volunteer Coordinator has been exceptionally good at addressing these instances.

As mentioned before, we are thinking about holding an end-of-term volunteer appreciation which hopefully engaged folks in ways that allow them to take a break from Zoom/their laptop. However, I am trying to be cognizant of the accessibility barriers that may arise from any potential activity.

I am also thinking of ways that volunteers will be able to engage with external trainings or personal development opportunities without adding more burdens on them. This is especially relevant as we approach the end of the semester, and I begin considering refresher training requirements. Some thoughts I have so far include trainings on Restorative/Racial Justice, Bystander Response (with SACHA), and Decolonization/Indigenous Sovereignty.

Finally, one of my execs has expressed a need to step down due to personal reasons. I am extremely glad that they were comfortable approaching me with their concerns and that they were able to prioritize their own needs, but I will definitely miss having them on our team. They intend to step down at the end of Fall Semester. I am not intending to re-hire for the position.

**Current Challenges**

One significant challenge has definitely been keeping track of what the MSU requires from Coordinators and by when, especially when there are often delays in between correspondences or the response does not fully address comments in the original email. One example of this has been the service review, which was unexpected news when it was first announced and continued to be confusing in terms of timelines for edits and launches. Most of the information that I received came from other Coordinators and the extra conversations they had sought out, rather than information that was readily provided. While I accept that this may also have been a missed memo on my part, I would like to request that reminders for significant dates and deadlines be sent or included in our shared Calendar. I think for many, or for myself specifically, it has been harder to keep track of the passing of time with everything online. This is especially relevant given the supposed opening for Coordinator hiring, which is another piece of information that I am personally unclear about. I acknowledge that I took significantly longer than intended to edit my Job Description, but I have also heard nothing regarding the expectations around when and how hiring would take place.

On the note of the service review, I would like to express frustration at some of the questions that were included, especially ones that were specific to WGEN and significant to the identity of the service, such as possible name changes. These were added without consultation to any current or previous WGEN Coordinators or any executive members. While there was an early opportunity for Coordinators to submit questions, I believe that Coordinators needed to be more closely involved in the creation of service reviews. As was the case with MSU Volunteer Training, this felt like an example of Coordinators frantically reacting to decisions rather than guiding the decisions.

Furthermore, I have been frustrated by the lack of social media support from the MSU. I am unclear about the current protocol, but it took Christian, the PCC Coordinator, sending an email on the day of TDoR for the MSU to internally acknowledge both the day and the event that the PCC/WGEN was holding. I know that the shared Calendar exists for events, but I am unsure who is accessing that and it feels like an extremely passive way of sharing information. I would appreciate further support in actively promoting the programming and operations that peer support services are running, this year especially.

Finally, I would like to express a pre-emptive concern around unpaid work that will take place over the break. While this is meant to be a period of time off to focus on exams, it is also the only extended and significant period that Coordinators have without classes to work through long-term planning for Winter Semester. This is especially important given the rapid new changes that are affecting services this year. As we have all realized, many of our Summer Year Plans are obsolete. Therefore, the unpaid break is the only ideal time to make adjustments and plans for the Winter Semester.

**Successes**

I am so proud of our team for running a whole 10 events, all online, over 6 days for Trans(forming) Mac!! I think that our first major campaign in a virtual sphere was definitely uniquely challenging and a completely new experience, and I am extremely proud of the work we did. I commend my trans execs for their continued involvement and engagement, and I am so grateful for the non-trans execs (and volunteers!) who participated and proactively supported Trans(forming) Mac in their own ways. I truly cannot express how exciting, stressful, and hopeful the campaign was, and how grateful I am for the outcomes we received. Shout-out again to the Events Committee and the Events Team for their involvement and support!!

**Other**

I have included one of our Trans(forming) Mac 2020 promotional graphics below. I also wanted to mention and offer my gratitude to a personal acquaintance who has been supporting WGEN’s Facebook promotions since August! It was an unexpected boon this year!

****