

Introduction

In 2021, upon near completion of the association’s first strategic plan developed in 2017, the LGBTQ Faculty and Staff Association (FSA) turned to the future and began the development of a second strategic plan to guide the association into 2025. The FSA’s leadership, initially a steering committee and eventually an executive board, uses the following planning framework:

<p>Phase 1 – Information Gathering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership wants and needs • Strategic partners • Campus climate • Best practices 	<p>Phase 3 – Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key performance indicators • Oversight • Budget • Membership feedback
<p>Phase 2 – Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SWOT analysis • Identifying themes • Prioritization • Action planning 	<p>Phase 4 – Implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress reporting • Membership communication • Strategic partner communication • Evaluation

The LGBTQ Faculty and Association was first convened in 2014 by a group of University employees with a desire to start a group to create community, support and visibility for the LGBTQ+ faculty and staff of the University at Buffalo. In 2017, members of the FSA’s leadership organized the association’s first strategic plan to provide structure and priorities to the organization to support development and growth. Originally intended to be a one-year plan, the goals of the first strategic plan ultimately guided the association thru 2020 as a result of its large scope, and eventually as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Learn more about the history of the LGBTQ FSA, including the first strategic plan at: www.buffalo.edu/lgbtqfsa/about.

Phase 1 – Information Gathering

The first phase of information gathering consisted of four main areas:

1. Membership Wants and Needs

It has been the practice of the association since 2017 to facilitate an annual wants and needs assessment with LGBTQ FSA members. Accordingly, an assessment was developed in the spring of 2021 and facilitated March 5th thru March 24th. The response rate was approximately 77%. Themes from the survey results included:

- Most respondents joined and paid FSA dues to provide advocacy and support to LGBTQ faculty/staff and to LGBTQ students, to represent LGBTQ visibility on campus, and to contribute to LGBTQ initiatives on campus.

- The majority of respondents felt the current offering of informational and social events is sufficient.
- Many respondents indicated that if they were unable to attend every LGBTQ FSA event, they want the current amount of event offerings to remain the same.
- The vast majority of respondents support the development of a LGBTQ FSA sponsored student scholarship.
- The vast majority of respondents indicated that public art campus that promotes equity, diversity and inclusion is important.

2. Strategic Partners

Acknowledging that the LGBTQ FSA, upon inception in 2014 and development of the association's first strategic plan, has created meaningful partner relationships with both campus and community entities, feedback was gathered by offering strategic partners an opportunity to critique the LGBTQ FSA commitment to its mission and offer suggestion for future collaboration and success. Campus partners included the Intercultural and Diversity Center, the Gender Institute, the Office of Inclusive Excellence, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Human Resources, and the Minority Faculty and Staff Association. Community partners included Evergreen Health, the Pride Center of WNY, EmbraceWNY, and the Buffalo Niagara LGBTQ History Project. Feedback reports were gathered in March and April of 2021. Feedback results included:

- All partners feel the LGBTQ FSA fulfills its mission successfully and that it is important for UB to have an association for LGBTQ+ faculty and staff.
- Campus partners appreciate the FSA for candid and specific perspective on the LGBTQ+ employee experience, value the opportunity the FSA offers employees to develop community, and believe there is opportunity for the FSA to support more research done by faculty.
- Community partners appreciate the FSA for having shared programmatic goals and believe there is opportunity for greater collaboration.

3. Campus Climate

UB, under the leadership of the Vice Provost for Inclusive Excellence, conducted a campus climate survey in the spring of 2019. The survey was designed to measure the inclusiveness of UB's academic environment. The survey was administered in two rounds:

- In March, UB conducted the student survey, focused on their perceptions of UB as a welcoming and diverse learning and work environment
- In April, UB conducted the survey for faculty and staff examining UB as a welcoming and diverse work environment

As part of the LGBTQ FSA's strategic planning process, results of the climate survey filtered specifically through a LGBTQ+ participant lens were considered and reviewed by the LGBTQ FSA's leadership. More information about the 2019 climate survey can be found at: www.buffalo.edu/inclusion/strategic-initiatives/campus-culture-survey.

Additionally, in the fall of 2019, the Vice Provost for Inclusive Excellence convened a LGBTQ+ Support Services Committee of faculty, staff, and students. The committee was charged “to understand what constitutes best practices at other universities and how UB compares. What does UB currently offer with regard to support in areas of health, education, research, advocacy, and connection to the community? What is missing?” The final report from the committee, completed in February 2020, was also reviewed. The primary recommendation of the committee was:

“We recommend that UB create an LGBTQ+ campus center or resource center that is visible, has dedicated space, and designated full-time staff positions. This would centralize many, if not all, the LGBTQ+ services currently offered as well as be a hub for those very much still needed at UB. A campus or resource center would make LGBTQ+ support services more accessible to the students, faculty, and staff who need to be able to find information more easily. A campus and resource center would also provide programming and a place to connect LGBTQ+ people and allies to the various university and community resources that would make UB, Buffalo, and Western New York a safer and more supportive place to live, learn, and work.”

4. Best Practice

In an attempt to learn more about campus communities outside of the University at Buffalo, LGBTQ FSA leadership facilitated a review of 30+ campuses across the United States with a four-star ranking of higher with the Campus Pride Index, the only national, independent tool assessing LGBTQ-friendly policies, programs and practices on college campuses. More information about Campus Pride can be found at: www.campusprideindex.org. SUNY peers reviewed included University at Albany, University of Binghamton, Stony Brook University, SUNY Downstate Medical Center, and SUNY Upstate Medical Center. AAU (Association of American Universities) peers reviewed included Brown University, Rutgers University, The Pennsylvania State University, University of Michigan and University of Pittsburgh. Review concluded in February 2021. Themes gathered upon review included:

- Most institutions with a five-star ranking have a LGBTQ+ resource center and/or dedicated professional staff to coordinating LGBTQ+ services.
- Few institutions have a LGBTQ+ faculty and staff association similar to the structure of UB’s FSA. Many highly ranked institutions engage faculty and staff through a LGBTQ+ and/or gender center.
- Many institutions have some form of scholarship opportunity that promotes LGBTQ+ advocacy.
- Some institutions have public facing directories of LGBTQ+ faculty and staff associated with a center, a diversity-focused unit, and/or a safe zone program.
- Of institutions that have an association for faculty and staff, most have a means of accepting dues and/or donations.
- Some institutions offer a LGBTQ+ student mentoring program with faculty and staff.

Phase 2 - Strategy

SWOT Analysis

Equipped with feedback and research, the LGBTQ FSA's leadership facilitated a SWOT analysis in April 2021 with specific consideration of membership needs and experience, communication, awareness and visibility, programs and offerings, resources, organizational performance, and strategic partnerships.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<p>Things we do well. Reasons our members are satisfied. Qualities that separate us from another entities. Internal valuable assets.</p>	<p>Things we lack. Reasons our members are dissatisfied. The limitations of our resources.</p>	<p>Untapped program or initiative at similar institutions. An emerging need or interest of our members. Positive media coverage or budding partnerships.</p>	<p>Emerging competitors. Shifting regulations or oversight. Negative media coverage.</p>

SWOT analysis results were:

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<p><i>Safe space for members; Offer consistent networking opportunities; Good website; Inclusive branding; Membership is inclusive of faculty and staff across three campuses; Good follow through; Consistent events (meetings, social events, etc.); Dedicated steering committee; Good partnership with OIX</i></p>	<p><i>Not racially or ethnically diverse; Faculty and staff not always aware; Membership base doesn't include senior leadership; FSA leadership is primarily staff; Budget is only supported by membership dues (no standardized institutional support); No history or tradition; LGBTQ+ identity requires self-disclosure (there is no institutional measure); Unsure of trans membership needs</i></p>	<p><i>Partnership with EDI on self-disclosure; Faculty research; Partnership with HR; Community partnerships (Pride Parade participation, volunteering, etc.); Advocacy (create a process for resolutions, statements, etc.); Utilizing new leadership structure for the first time; Partnership with UUP; Connections with students and/or IDC; Connections with Alumni Engagement; Partnership with student orgs; Social media; Physical space advertising (brand mark installation, display cases, etc.)</i></p>	<p><i>Complicated campus budget process; UB organizational structure doesn't have a line to the FSA; Leadership continuity; Membership fee (not affordable for everyone); OIX is under resourced; No LGBTQ resource center; Competing social justice work and focuses; Student groups aren't always active (student leaders are transient)</i></p>

Action Brainstorm

Following analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, the FSA leadership completed an action brainstorm in July 2021. In response to the prompt "what should we do next?" FSA leaders answered (redacted):

Have at least one [informational event] each semester be facilitated by a faculty member with the hope that this will increase awareness and possible recruitment, specifically amongst faculty.

take responsibility for our social media and make a real effort to use it effectively. talk to our strategic partners and get tips on their best methods of communication. talk seriously about who in senior leadership roles could be more of an advocate and ally for us to give us a stronger voice on campus. Get our logo more visible on campus--poster? banner? find local summer outdoor events to volunteer. schedule a spring/summer outdoor meet up event.

Ensure the webpage outlines all of the benefits of becoming a member

According to a study (Balsam et al., 2011) 22% of all individuals involved in same-sex relationships in the United States are BIPOC. Increase our membership to reflect that percentage at a minimum. Possible action is to host BIPOC-oriented events and engagement activities.

Make connections with other groups on campus to continue building diversity.

Work to be represented in new hire orientation events so that new hires can join our group.

Speak at faculty brown bag events on LGBTQ issues so we are more well known on campus.

Work to have events that highlight current and emerging faculty research on LGBTQ+ issues: [redacted] ([redacted] research is on bisexuality and substance use), [redacted] ([redacted] research is on queer youth), and [redacted] ([redacted] is queer issues broadly, reproductive health, and bisexual stigma specifically). Gender studies does some work too and already have a lot of brown bag events throughout the semester it might be nice to partner with them.

Work with other groups to expand social justice rather than thinking of as competition. Any rights for any of us are rights for all of us. We will never bring in more diverse audiences if we think our issues are different than all other social justice issues.

Maybe work with other groups on campus ([redacted]) to create moral Monday type events or something similar to create space for change and education among people.

There are EDI dean's or associate deans in every school on campus they are constantly looking for programming to inform their faculty and staff of diversity issues, we should work to make sure our voice is heard in these spaces.

Maybe work with implicit bias trainer or sexual assault trainers to ensure they are using representative examples and they aren't only using cis het examples. We KNOW sexual assault happens to our community far more than in cis het communities and YET the sexual assault trainings typically barely mention LGBTQ+ communities. We can fight for this to change.

These types of changes though perhaps small would help to change culture on campus. And be far more impactful than ally trainings that give people a pass in thinking they have learned all they can learn about LGBTQ+ populations. It is important to remind people that one hour training is not enough. And for students to understand that Obergefell or same sex marriage didn't solve everything. (I had a student tell me that in the spring - Obergefell happened for them in middle school - so ancient history to college students).

There's a lot we can do with little resources it just takes creativity and finding the right partners.

Provide a membership fee discount for employees making below a certain pay level....can we do that though with privacy of pay?

Have at least one article related to LGBTQ+ FSA in UB Now each month to increase awareness

Establish a repetitive time and date (first Wednesday of every month) for general membership meetings to create predictability, especially for new members.

Create marquee event that can bring together at least 40 employee attendees to celebrate a LGBTQ+ celebration

I think working with EDI more to have financial and faculty support. We need more visibility and need the UB community to understand our role. I think attending staff meetings and having upper management support can help a lot.

Contact HR to ensure that relevant and up to date information about the FSA is included during on-boarding. If it isn't included provide comprehensive and succinct content for all new employees

Revisit conversation with HR, see where they are with onboarding and where affinity groups fit. OR would they be able to send affinity groups emails of new employees as they are onboarded so we can do direct outreach?

Pending what the new "art" projects will be, ensure the FSA has a seat at the table for any event planning so that we can be involved and also promote the FSA. Having a conversation with [REDACTED] or other faculty to see why faculty is not specifically more involved? [REDACTED] came to the focus groups but obviously has not attended our events. Or even [REDACTED]. I just wonder why the academic folks are not more connected. I know [they may] typically live in different worlds but there must be some common ground.

New leadership hosting fall outdoor event for FSA and also open to those who want to join that day.

Phase 3 - Organization

Action Planning

From August thru November of 2021, the action brainstorm was transitioned into a thematic and prioritized set of goals with key performance indicators, creating the new framework for the FSA's second strategic plan:

1. Grow the Membership

Comprehensively promote membership across campus and efficiently onboard and retain members.

Action Step	Key Performance Indicator
1.1 Promote the FSA to new employees.	Promotion of the LGBTQ FSA is integrated into HR orientation for new employees.
1.2 Enhance the onboarding experience of new members.	Schedule, host and evaluate one new member orientation or social per semester.
1.3 Standardize recruitment and retention practices.	Annual or semesterly practices for recruitment and retention are created, implemented and archived.
1.4 Understand the diversity of our membership.	A comparison of identify based demographic profile of LGBTQ FSA membership is compared to all faculty and staff is documented in a report.
1.5 Partner with MFSA to promote membership.	A multipronged approach involving shared web content and campus email advertisements is developed.
1.6 Provide discount or sponsor membership options.	A means of fundraising for and offering sponsored memberships is formalized and sustained.

2. Enhance Communication

Develop consistent, timely, branded communication across multiple channels.

Action Step	Key Performance Indicator
2.1 Create comprehensive LGBTQ+ web content.	Faculty research, information, people profiles, library offerings, parent info, etc. are incorporated into the LGBTQ+ Gateway.
2.2 Increase visual advertisement in physical campus space.	One graphic handout is created and one graphic in a physical space in a high traffic campus area is installed.
2.3 Develop an intentional social media presence.	Guidelines for posting and engaging on Facebook are developed and implemented.
2.4 Utilize campus partner listservs consistently.	Create a marketing checklist to include, but not limited to UDOs, PSS, FS and UC listservs.
2.5 Have a recognizable brand.	Create an organizational marketing guide and communications calendar.

3. Foster Community

Continue to offer opportunities to connect, socialize with, and support LGBTQ faculty and staff.

Action Step	Key Performance Indicator
3.1 Continue educational or topical Lunch and Learn events and social meet ups.	A minimum of 2-3 Lunch and Learns per academic year and 3-4 social meet ups per calendar year are held.
3.2 Create a marquee annual event that gathers membership.	An event template is proposed and considered by the LGBTQ FSA E-Board.
3.3 Institutionalize [more] LGBTQ+ campus tradition.	Current traditions are documented on the LGBTQ+ Gateway and a Queer Programming Committee is convened and engaged.
3.4 Promote faculty research on LGBTQ+ issues.	A diverse group of 3-5 faculty are profiled online.
3.5 Expand the scope of FSA commitment to social justice.	A minimum of 1 program or community service opportunity with a social justice component is held.
3.6 Develop a promotional and informational event for faculty and staff.	An event template is proposed and considered by the LGBTQ FSA E-Board.
3.7 Collaborate with campus partners on awards and Lavender Ceremony.	A working group on LGBTQ and/or DEI recognition is tasked and convened.

4. Organizational Efficiency

Enhance the form and function of the association.

Action Step	Key Performance Indicator
4.1 Standardize information and feedback gathering with strategic partners.	An annual assessment cycle is developed.
4.2 Identify a reporting structure to senior university leadership.	Develop an every-other-month meeting structure between LGBTQ FSA leadership and OIX.
4.3 Thoughtfully engage with outside corporate or community entities.	Principles for engaging with outside entities partners are established.
4.4 Responsibly manage FSA funds, including donations and dues.	Develop an annual, zero-based budget structure.
4.5 Provide members low commitment leadership opportunities.	Participation with the strategic planning process is opened to LGBTQ FSA membership.

5. Institutional Impact

Advocate for institutional LGBTQ student, faculty and staff services.

Action Step	Key Performance Indicator
5.1 Continue to advocate for a resource center.	Advocacy efforts for a resource center are targeted and documented.
5.2 Pursue accreditation from an independent and endorsed entity.	Review from the Campus Pride Index is solicited and completed.

In May and June of 2022, members of the LGBTQ FSA’s executive board were assigned to oversight groups for each action step. Groups will determine a timeframe for completion, be responsible for quarterly reporting, and will assign a cost factor using the following key:

- COST FACTOR KEY:**
- \$ no significant cost or investment required to complete
 - \$\$ some cost or investment required; integrate into FSA operational budget
 - \$\$\$ significant cost or investment required; pursue external financial support

Feedback and support for the second strategic plan was gathered from FSA members at semesterly general membership meetings held on September 29, 2021, February 23, 2022, and November 8, 2022.

Phase 4 - Implementation

Beginning in July 2022, the fourth phase of strategic planning began. Internal executive board progress reporting will occur on a quarterly basis. Communication to FSA members will occur on a semesterly basis at general membership meetings. Communication to strategic partners will occur on an annual basis, or as needed.

In 2025, the process will conclude with internal evaluation, feedback from members and partners, and the pursuit of a new strategic direction.

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Each member of the LGBTQ FSA leadership contributes as a volunteer and does so outside of their professional role within the University at Buffalo.