To: Beverly Davenport, Sr. Vice-President and Provost; Debra Merchant, Vice President Student Affairs; Nicole Mayo, Director Leadership and Engagement

From: University of Cincinnati Women’s Center

RE: Open Response to External Program Review

Date: April 10, 2015

On behalf of the Women’s Center (WC) staff, thank you for the investment in the external review that the Center proposed and implemented this academic year. This investment demonstrates clear institutional and divisional support of gender equity and a commitment to diversity and inclusive excellence. Based on the findings and recommendations of the review and subsequent discussions among stakeholders, including the Women’s Center Advisory Committee and senior leadership, the Women’s Center offers this response to further inform next steps.

We stand proud of our remarkable history as one of the longest, continuously running campus-based women’s centers in the country and the unique contributions our Center makes to our campus community. In particular, we want to underscore a few highlighted by the review: advocacy related to sexual and gender-based violence prevention and survivor services; creating feminist community; demonstrating UC’s commitment to gender equity; programming about women and gender; consistent safe spaces and trusted referrals; collaborative programming with other Student Affairs units; and academic partnerships, particularly Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

For example, the WC has delivered survivor advocacy services for fifteen years and provided critical leadership in response to the shifting landscape of campus sexual and gender-based violence response. This year, Lynn Rosenthal, White House Advisor on Violence Against Women visited our campus in acknowledgement of the advocacy efforts led by the Women’s Center on this campus. The review cited the Women’s Center as THE place for feminist community, as expressed by diverse students, staff, and faculty. Building feminist community fosters leadership development and experiential learning, evidenced by deepened academic partnerships through internships, co-op placements, and graduate practicums. Some of these flagship programs have received additional university support through UC Forward and the Diversity Incentive Grant.

Growth opportunities articulated by the review align with our own, internal discussions about the future of our work. We feel it is important to call attention to the need for programs and services intentionally designed to meet the needs of specific, underrepresented groups including women of color, graduate students, men and male-identified students, trans* and gender-nonconforming students, international students, and student parents. Additional programming requires increased resources and continued coordination among identity-based centers. We are excited about these opportunities and are confident that we have created a solid framework to support and sustain this programmatic growth. For example, over the course of the past several years, the Women’s Center has taken deliberate steps to create more gender inclusive programming, including seeking external consultation, development of new branding initiatives, intentionally designed recruitment materials, and securing professional and student development opportunities in these areas.
The Women’s Center appreciates the level of stakeholder participation throughout the program review process. We have heard the voices of the community we serve and offer here our next steps:

- The full-time Program Coordinator for Sexual Assault Survivor Advocacy has been hired and will begin June 1.
- The Women’s Center strongly supports the recommended qualifications for the Director position and the expressed need for filling this vital leadership role as soon as possible to ensure sustained programs and services.
- The Women’s Center will continue to work with senior administration to consider a name change and a revised mission statement which will more accurately represent our expanded focus areas. As noted by the review, areas of focus to highlight include: leadership and civic engagement; community building; bridging theory to practice; provision of resources and support. The WC also acknowledges the need to communicate the research conducted in the Center to the campus community, including campus needs assessments and status reports; this year, we implemented an evidenced-based qualitative research study that assessed Campus Readiness for Sexual Violence Prevention Programming.
- Effective Fall 2015, the Department of Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies will roll out a revised undergraduate and graduate curriculum that formalizes a strengthened partnership with both the Women’s Center and the LGBTQ Center through the provision of an “applied track”. This track further supports the Center’s academic partnership while enabling deeper collaborations with the LGBTQ Center.
- The Women’s Center continues to build academic and community partnerships in support of high-impact experiential learning opportunities.
  - Academic partnerships extend beyond the Department of Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. For example, a newly established, year-long, graduate practicum for Social Work students focused on sexual and gender-based violence advocacy and prevention will continue next year. This practicum solidifies partnership with Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence and connects campus advocacy to state and national advocacy related to sexual and gender-based violence.
  - Community partnerships: Collaboration with Peaslee Neighborhood Center increasingly supports student leadership and civic engagement through action research, service learning, and community building. Cross-training with Women Helping Women enhances direct service provision and coordination; this year, shared education focused on critical masculinities and engaging men in the work.
- Enhanced capacity related to assessment will be realized as staffing needs are met and positions filled. We will work with the Director of Student Program Effectiveness to explore new ways of compiling and reporting existing data collected from our ongoing assessment and evaluation efforts. We are dedicated to finding new ways of telling our story.

It is clear and evident that the Women’s Center directly supports UC2019, the Academic Master Plan, particularly in the principles of Learning; Discovery; Community; Diversity; and Collaboration. We are poised for the Third Century and excited to innovate and grow in transformative ways.