

ABOUT

MISSION

SAFE Center provides support services for survivors of sexual assault, dating/domestic violence, and stalking; as well as violence prevention and feminist education programs for the CSU campus. Our focus is to cultivate an affirming and trauma-informed culture of consent while working toward systemic change to end all forms of oppression within our community.

GUIDING PHILOSOPHIES

- 1. We believe survivors.
- 2. Our work is informed by intersectional feminist praxis and critical inquiry.
- 3. We believe that generative conflict and accountability practices are ways of growing toward a more just and violence free campus, community, and world.
- 4. We believe in building authentic relationships across difference.
- 5. We believe transparency fosters empowered, informed, and collaborative decision-making at all levels.
- 6. We practice a trauma-informed approach, including validating the right to rage and other forms of emotion.
- 7. We strive to dismantle systems of power and Grow Consent Culture in pursuit of a more just campus community.
- 8. We strive for a proactive sense of belonging, and we’re fiercely dedicated to removing barriers for all people who access our Center.
- 9. We aspire to build a SAFE, survivor-centered, and trauma-informed campus through direct service and community education.
- 10. We are committed to cultivating student success for our campus.

HISTORY

The Survivor Advocacy and Feminist Education Center at Colorado State University has evolved over five decades. Its model is a direct result of the evolution of the student and academic affairs structures. In the late 1960s throughout the nation, the Women’s Liberation Movement coincided with the restructuring of Student Personnel Services. On most campuses, the offices of the Dean of Women and the Dean of Men were combined into the Office of the Dean of Students. Colorado State was no exception to this change. However, as the change was made in 1970, the visionary administration at CSU saw a need to continue to provide a more contemporary office for women, and created the Office of Women’s Relations, which reported to the Office of Student Relations. Holding joint responsibilities in the Office of Student Relations, Chris Kelley was selected to be the Director of the newly named unit. She remained until 1972. Early work focused on the education of all students as to the concerns of women, as well as the assessment of the status of women at the university.

Following Chris Kelley’s departure, Mary Leonard was named to the position in 1972. She continued the development of the office, building relationships with students, faculty, and community leaders who were working on issues specific to women and their changing roles in society. During Leonard’s tenure, the first campus conference on women was held, and a plan to develop a library for print and audio-visual resources was proposed.

In January 1974, Karen Wedge, Assistant Director of Student Relations, was named Interim Director of the Office of Women’s Relations when Ms. Leonard resigned from the position. A national search followed, and Karen was hired for the Director’s position in July of 1974. Under Karen’s tenure, the office continued to develop and evolve. New approaches to addressing all aspects of the institutional climate for women and men emerged after completing a federally mandated Title IX Institutional Self-Evaluation, which was chaired by Ms. Wedge in 1976.

For clarification purposes, the name of the office was changed to the Office of Women’s Programs in 1974. When the Office of Student Relations was dissolved in 1981, the Director of Women’s Programs began reporting directly to the Vice President for Student Affairs.

The Office of Women’s Programs and Studies has been a participating member of the Advocacy Group since its inception in 1979 which also included Black Student Services, El Centro, and Resources for Disabled Students.

The early years of the Office of Women’s Programs required efforts be made to address concerns related to access to programs and opportunities for women students, faculty and staff while providing education and resources to individuals dealing with situations that were less than hospitable to the notion of equal opportunity. Included was the implementation of programs, conferences, consciousness raising and assertiveness training. Resources which endure to this day include the Film and Video Library, the Victim Assistance Team (VAT), and Survivor Support Group.

The VAT hotline was one of the first sexual assault hotline programs on a university campus in the nation, and one of the first four campus Women’s Centers to provide sexual assault support services. VAT began in 1975 and served three survivors the first year. Since then, we have served hundreds of survivors.

A significant change occurred in 1985 when the administration of the Women’s Interdisciplinary Studies Program, founded by a subcommittee of the Faculty Women’s Caucus in 1977, was moved to the Office in a cooperative agreement with the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences. The change was made in order to provide the program with more visibility and a home. The title of the office changed to Women’s Program and Studies. The relationship with AAHS continued until 1988 at which time the program began reporting to the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

During the late 1980s and through the 1990s, the Office of Women’s Programs and Studies continued to grow and evolve. A long-time program of the Center, Women at Noon, in conjunction with other campus and community entities started in 1982 and continued until 2015. In 1993, Women at Noon received a financial gift in the name of Kathryn T. Bohannon. This fund was established by David Folkes in honor of his wife, Kathryn, a CSU alumna and engineer. The Fund continues to serve the CSU community in other areas across campus.

In 2004, after 31 years of service to Colorado State University, Karen Wedge retired. Jody Jessup Anger, the Assistant Director of Women’s Programs and Studies was appointed Interim Director. In fall 2005, Chris Linder served as the Director for five years, through summer of 2010.

During the 2009-2010 academic year, OWP determined that an academic and a student affairs branch needed to be distinct and separate departments. Subsequently, the Center for Women’s Studies and Gender Research was formally established on the Academic side, currently housed within Ethnic Studies. During the fall of 2010, former Director Dr. Kathy Sisneros was hired, and one of the first responsibilities was to rename/rebrand the Center. By spring of 2011, OWPS was renamed as the Women and Gender Advocacy Center, and fully functioned as a student service within the Student Diversity Programs and Services (SDPS)-Division of Student Affairs. In February 2016, Monica Rivera was hired as the Director of the WGAC after a short stint as the interim.

2021 came with many changes for the Center. First, WGAC, along with the other SDPS offices, were moved from the Division of Student Affairs to the Office for Inclusive Excellence, or OIE (formally the Office for Diversity). This restructuring led many staff members to leave WGAC, including Monica Rivera in June of 2022.

WGAC had two different interim Directors after Monica’s departure. Casey Malsam, the Assistant Director for Victim Services, served as interim Director from June 2022 – March of 2023, when she left for another position. Shannon Archibeque-Engle, AVP of OIE, served as interim from March 2023 – January 2024.

In January of 2024, after a national search, Assistant Director for Victim Services, Victoria Benjamin, was hired as the Director of WGAC. One of her first decisions as Director, after significant feedback from the campus community, was to rename and rebrand the office. After an internal voting process, Survivor Advocacy and Feminist Education (SAFE) Center was chosen as WGAC’s new name.

Today, SAFE Center continues to offer confidential advocacy services to survivors, providing resources and support for students navigating the academic, legal, medical, and emotional aftermath of sexual violence, sexual harassment, stalking, and/or relationship violence. Survivor Support Services, once completely volunteer maintained, has expanded to five full-time, professional advocates and three interpersonal violence counselors.

SAFE has also grown significantly in the areas of the educational programs and advocacy. Trainings and workshops are facilitated throughout campus by our professional staff and very talented peer educators, the Red Whistle Brigade, as well as 3 full-time programming staff. Signature programs include the Consent Turns Me on Campaign, awareness month events, and programming around the theme of Grow Consent Culture.

Contact

Phone: (970) 491-6384  
Email: safecenter@colostate.edu

Survivor Support Services:  
112 Student Services  
Monday-Friday, 8am – 5pm  
Find a confidential advocate and/or interpersonal violence counselor here.

Feminist Education Programs:  
234 Lory Student Center  
Monday-Friday, 8am – 5pm

Confidential Advocacy

Free service for CSU students, faculty, and staff.

Victim Assistance Team Hotline: 970-492-4242  
Available 24/7/365

Advocacy available by drop-in or appointment:  
112 Student Services  
(corner of Libbie Coy Way and University Avenue)  
Monday-Friday, 8am – 5pm

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