

To: Senior Staff

From: Lisa Ly, Senior Research Analyst

Date: September 28, 2022

Subject: A Qualitative Exploration of LGBTQ+ Mental Health: Factors Associated with Positive Mental Health & Desired Mental Health Resources/Events, Winter/Spring 2022

OVERVIEW

In fall 2020, respondents to the De Anza College LGBTQ+ student survey mentioned they would like the Women, Gender and Sexuality Center (WGSC) to expand its services and offer psychological or mental health services and for the college to offer more mental health/emotional well-being events. The WGSC engaged Institutional Research and Planning (IRP) to conduct focus groups to learn what factors do LGBTQ+ students associate with positive mental health and what specific mental health resources or events do LGBTQ+ students want at the college. The focus groups were initially planned for winter 2022 quarter. An online survey was also available for students who wanted to provide their input but not participate in a group session. Since there were no discernable patterns that emerged from the winter focus groups, another round of focus groups were conducted during spring 2022 quarter. The focus groups were facilitated by Dawn Lee, faculty director of professional development and note-taking was completed by IRP. After signing up for a focus group session, participants were informed they would receive a Target \$25 gift card. Funding for the gift cards was provided by the Office of the President.

A total of 27 students participated in the winter/spring 2022 focus groups. Most participants identified as male and gay (30%) or trans/non-binary and pansexual (11%), as well as were relatively new, enrolling at De Anza for the first time during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-21 or 2021-22 (N=16). The remaining 11 participants were returning students from over three years ago with some concurrently enrolled at four-year institutions or already in possession of a bachelor's degree and were continuing their education or changing careers. The majority of the participants had already experienced face-to-face/hybrid and online learning (N=18) with the remaining experiencing exclusively online (N=8) or exclusively face-to-face (N=1) learning.

This report begins with a summary of the key findings, highlighting potential college groups/units who could affect change. Detailed findings are provided thereafter, organized by the following research areas: (1) factors associated with positive LGBTQ+ mental health, (2) welcoming and unwelcoming college spaces and effect on mental health and (3) desired mental health resources and events. Select quotes from the focus groups are included in each research area to provide context to the findings. The final section of this report is the appendix, which provides details about the winter/spring 2022 recruitment process, questions asked of focus group participants, focus group participants' demographics, winter 2022 interest form results and winter 2022 online survey results.

SUMMARY AND AREAS OF OPPORTUNITIES & IMPROVEMENTS

Factors Associated with Positive LGBTQ+ Mental Health

The **top factors** participants attributed to **positive mental** included:

- **open-mindedness, awareness and education about LGBTQ+ community** (N=9)
- **College spaces and events where LGBTQ+ students can feel safe and welcome** (N=7)
- **Not being judged or scrutinized** (N=6)
- **Use of pronouns and preferred names** (N=6)
- **Having LGBTQ+ specific community spaces** (N=6)

These factors were not mutually exclusive as many participants expressed how the individual factors were related and could lead to positive mental health. Open-mindedness, awareness and education about the LGBTQ+ community could lead to greater acceptance of LGBTQ+ identities; and thereby, promoting the use of the preferred names and pronouns and minimizing judgement and scrutiny. Having spaces where LGBTQ+ student can feel safe, and for some participants, they expressed having spaces specifically for LGBTQ+ students, was important for community building. These findings were similar to results from the winter 2022 online survey (see [Appendix E](#)).

How LGBTQ+ Participants Felt Supported

Support from non-LGBTQ+ community is important. As one participant shared: *“That helped me a lot throughout college to know that there were professors and peers, who might not have the same exact gender identity as me or... may not be queer but for them to be able to support and validate and ... stand up for LGBT rights ... It's like a school mission and also like a school-wide environment of inclusive[ness].”* Participants provided examples of spaces, instructional and non-instructional, where employees exercised open-mindedness, awareness and inclusive approaches in helping them feel seen and heard.

One way the college could support the LGBTQ+ community is to normalize the use and practice of preferred names and pronouns. Participants shared when preferred names/pronouns were or were not used, it had a profound impact on them. In classroom settings, when instructors encouraged all students to provide their preferred names/pronouns, participants felt overwhelming relieved because they did not have to initiate the request and stand out. **Another way the college could support the LGBTQ+ community is to promote awareness and education about LGBTQ+ language and identities and how to address microaggressions.** Participants recognized when they encountered microaggressions in the classroom, they give their instructors the benefit of the doubt, understanding that some instructors are not aware or ill-equipped to address the incident. While participants shared experiences of microaggression in the classroom, the onus is not on instructors alone, but rather whoever is in the position of having the most authority and influence over the space and this could be any employee of the college. By

Who could affect change?

- Board policy
- Pride Center
- Professional Development
- Faculty
- Classified staff

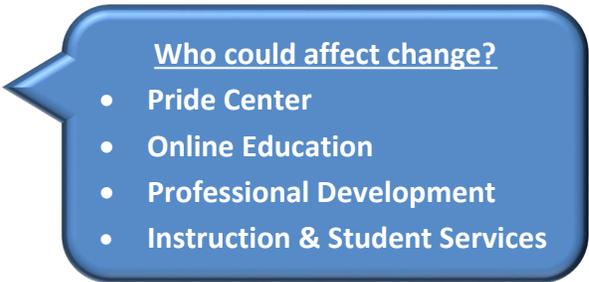
educating the college on LGBTQ+ language and identities, everyone is responsible for creating a welcoming and safe college space for LGBTQ+ students.

Other examples of spaces where participants felt welcomed and the circumstances that made the space comfortable included the following:

- Instructors who did not single out students based on identities, but rather treated them like any other student and created a setting where they felt safe and more willing to share their experience.
- A political science instructor who recognized the LGBTQ+ community and integrated LGBTQ+ community members into the course material.
- A sign language instructor who incorporated LGBTQ+ language such as ace¹ into the course material.
- An academic counselor who created a supportive environment by sharing stories and modeling vulnerability.
- An advisor who guided a participant to a LGBTQ+ opportunity that led to other social justice opportunities.
- Winter 2022 online survey respondents identified the De Anza LGBTQ+ Alliance student club, IMPACT AAPI learning community and library as spaces where they felt respected and their identities were affirmed.

How LGBTQ+ Participants Felt Unsupported

Environments where it was unclear if people were open-minded and accepting of differing viewpoints or identities made participants feel anxious, guarded and unsafe. Spaces where preferred names/pronouns were not initiated by instructors or facilitators as well as outright disregard for preferred names/pronouns was also mentioned. General spaces that may not necessarily centered on LGBTQ+ identities such as breakout rooms/groups (online and in person), administrator/staff offices and financial aid as being uncomfortable spaces.² It was noted that breakout rooms/groups were uncomfortable because participants felt a lack of engagement or the group members did not have the skills to adequately facilitate discussions they were tasked to do. Online survey respondents mentioned employees were impatient and annoyed by their inquiries and need for assistance in office spaces and in-person classes.



Who could affect change?

- Pride Center
- Online Education
- Professional Development
- Instruction & Student Services

Desired Mental Health Resources and Events

Participants requested explicitly for LGBTQ+ identified counselors/therapists. Their need to have a professional who is within the community and could relate to their experiences reiterated

¹ Shortened term for asexual.

² Administrator and staff offices and financial aid was mentioned by winter 2022 online survey respondents.

the importance of LGBTQ+ representation and community building. **Other suggestions included providing strategies to cope with low familial support, offering free personal products (e.g., tampons, maxi pads, condoms, etc.) as well as assessing and revising healthcare intake forms to be more trauma-informed and gender affirming.**

Participants would like to see **social and educational events that help them de-stress from daily happenings or midterms and exams, raises LGBTQ+ awareness on campus, or connects them with the broader, off-campus LGBTQ+ community and resources.** They reiterated their **need to have regular events for**

LGBTQ+ students to gather and be in community with peers, particularly those who lack support from their family/community outside of De Anza or those disconnected and isolated from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Who could affect change?

- College Administration
- Psychological Services
- Student Health Services
- Counseling Services
- Pride Center

Preferred Method of Communication to Learn More about Resources and Events

While it was not a focus of the study, the topic of how participants would like to hear or learn more about resources and activities was discussed. **Suggested platforms to communicate ranged from**

Who could affect change?

- Office of Communications
- Online Education
- Faculty
- Classified Staff

promotion on the first day of class, Canvas, social media (e.g., De Anza's Instagram), Discord, Reddit communities or podcast. Locating information on De Anza's website was not user friendly for participants. They relied on search engines such as Google or word of mouth to find information, resources and events. In the latter instance, the word of mouth was usually happenstance. A few focus group and winter 2022 online

survey respondents shared they were not aware that De Anza offered psychological services or hosted LGBTQ+ group sessions. Their sentiment is similar to results from the winter 2022 interest form (see [Appendix D](#)).

DETAILED FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

1. Factors Participants Associated with Positive LGBTQ+ Mental Health

Participants were asked to select any words from a list they felt could attribute to positive mental health, and encouraged to add any words or phrases not already on the list. The **top factors** that participants **attributed to LGBTQ+ positive mental health** included the following:

- **Open-mindedness, awareness and education about LGBTQ+ community (N=9)**
- **College spaces and events where LGBTQ+ students can feel safe and welcome (N=7) and Acceptance of LGBTQ+ identities (N=7)**
- **Not being judged or scrutinized (N=6), Using pronouns and preferred names (N=6) and Having LGBTQ+ specific community spaces (N=6)**

Table 1:

Factors Participants Associated with Positive Mental Health

Factors	Responses	Percent
Open-mindedness, awareness and education about LGBTQ+ community	9	15.0%
Having college spaces and events where LGBTQ+ students can feel safe and welcome	7	11.7%
Acceptance of LGBTQ+ identities	7	11.7%
Not being judged or scrutinized	6	10.0%
Using pronouns and preferred names	6	10.0%
Other: Having LGBTQ+ specific community spaces	6	10.0%
Having representation of LGBTQ+	5	8.3%
Receiving support from non-LGBTQ+ faculty and students	4	6.7%
Seeing LGBTQ+ people/community reflected in class materials	4	6.7%
Other: Having LGBTQ+ specific resources available	3	5.0%
Having gender neutral restrooms	3	5.0%
Total	60	100.0%

Open-mindedness, awareness and education about LGBTQ+ community

- *“I love to see those words [acceptance and open-mindedness] because that [lends to a] feeling of safety.”*
- *“Recognition and acknowledgement of someone's existence is just very validating and that in itself makes me as a person feel good.”*

College spaces and events where LGBTQ+ students can feel safe and welcome

- *“The words that kind of popped up for me was the idea of feeling safe. Feeling safe can be like mentally safe or also just feeling safe in your surroundings as well.”*
- *“I think that having college spaces and events where LGBTQ+ students can feel safe and welcome is my number one thing that I would choose in order to make my mental health more positive because I feel like ever since the pandemic began ... I haven't had so many chances to like go out and be in contact with people. So, I feel like I have lost the connection with people in the LGBT community.”*

Acceptance of LGBTQ+ identities

- *“I definitely believe that not being judged and like the acceptance of your LGBTQ+ identity is really positive ... I'm Latina, like it's kind of looked down upon when you start like trying to be more open-minded about your sexuality.”*
- *“I feel acknowledgement from professors, whether or not they're LGBTQ ... is very important to me because that's someone you're supposed to like look up to ... I'm feeling seen by them and supported by them. It's kind of very encouraging to me academically.”*

Not being judged or scrutinized

- *“I used to get bullied before so I have this like PTSD, and being around people I think kind of makes me feel nervous. And I have social anxiety because I just feel like I'm being judged or scrutinized for being gay and sometimes it's hard to hide it ... there's a reason why I'm sometimes masking myself or my identity.”*
- *“I feel like De Anza has been overwhelmingly positive and like I'm completely estranged from my family because of [my] queer identity and I'm transgender, non-binary.... So, I think that it's incredibly important because like having that judgment in one's life is enough to just throw something completely off balance when it comes to mental health.”*

Using pronouns and preferred names

- *“As someone who's had some online classes and a lot of in-person classes, I find that teachers are usually pretty good about using preferred names and pronouns, if you tell them. But they're not usually very good at asking. And I think that's something that I think they could definitely work on because normalizing that would make it easier when it's my turn to introduce myself and I'm the first one to say anything about pronouns. I'm worried about you know people in the class giving me that 'ugh' look... [By normalizing pronouns] it doesn't make me feel like I'm the 'other'.”*
- *“It's really a huge deal to me, and this is the only campus [De Anza] so far that I've been on where they gave me the option online to change to my preferred name ... It's been so affirming for me and it's a lot less hassle for me to constantly have to be correcting people or to even be embarrassed... I don't necessarily like to list my pronouns in my byline like unless I'm asked to because I want to make sure that everyone's on board. I'm not trying to be political. It's just who I am... I like when they [instructors] kind of force everyone to do it because then I can just put it on there and I'm not being extra about it.”*

Having LGBTQ+ specific community spaces

- *“I think having more explicitly LGBTQ space for queer students to meet would be a healthy thing to develop like a sense of community; and I think to add to the list, having queer specific mental health services of some kind ... something on campus to help guide students toward local [off-campus, community] resources that are maybe better equipped to help with LGBTQ+ specific needs. In San Jose, we have the Billy DeFrank LGBTQ Community Center ... De Anza could funnel students in their direction for specific needs if they'd be better suited to help students.”*

2A. On Campus/Online Spaces Where Participants Feel Welcomed

Participants were asked which De Anza spaces they have felt the most comfortable and welcomed. They were reminded to consider classroom instruction and student support services and resources, whether these spaces were on campus or online. **Responses varied with a few participants mentioning spaces where they felt comfortable that did not necessarily centered on their LGBTQ+ identities**, but rather their individual learning styles, social interaction preferences. Overall, there was **desire to be part of a larger community as well as the need to be seen, connected and supported as a student.**

- *“I like to feel like I'm being heard, and I think in a big group setting it's hard to feel like my ideas are having an impact. But when I'm with a teacher or a person, when I'm talking to them [one-on-one] and it's just us like balancing ideas off of each other, it feels a lot more like comfortable for me because I feel like we're both contributing to the conversation.”*
- *“I really enjoy the campus ... there's a lot of seating areas. Sometimes there's events outside by the cafeteria ... just seeing different people represented in that quad area. I think is a very welcoming place ... there's definitely an open space for networking with other people that share like minds and passions about different things.”*
- *“The statistics professor was super nice and she made so many accommodations for me, you know. I could turn in assignments later ... that was really nice and I felt like my mental health was being supported because they were giving me such leeway.”*

Participants who experienced welcoming spaces provided specific examples of what made those spaces so comfortable. For instance, two participants in the same focus group session both identified their COMM 1 Public Speaking course and **shared how their instructors treated them like any other student and did not single them out for their LGBTQ+ identity. Thereby, creating an environment where they felt safe to share their experiences.**

- Participant 1: *“He [instructor] makes everyone equal. He doesn't make anyone look different. No, not for their sexuality nor for their gender ... and he doesn't individually target someone. He asks the whole group, instead of just a single person.”*
- Participant 2: *“That really hits the nail on the head, I also want to shout out to like the classes, COMM 1 [Public Speaking], 8 [Argumentation and Critical Inquiry in Oral Communication], 9 [Argumentation: Analysis of Oral and Written Communication] and 10 [Fundamentals of Oral Communication]... One of the things that helped so much ... was having that balance between being able to blend in and just be a student then also having a safe space to bring light to my lived experiences as a queer person.”*

Other examples highlighted the key role that college employees in instruction and non-instruction spaces have impacted LGBTQ+ participants. In these instances, participants felt seen, accepted and less guarded.

- *“I [have] felt intentionally welcomed by the majority of my [online] instructors as a member of the queer community... [Political science instructor] has done a really great job of intentionally welcoming people from all over the gender and sexuality spectrums, anyone and everyone. Both in the way he talks, but also the course material ... just acknowledging and recognizing there are queer students at De Anza and in these classes... like we're here and a valuable member of the community, too... I took something called [California] Campus Camp ... we had a guest panel of speakers and he [instructor] made a point of elevating queer voices and career politicians like Alex Lee.”*
- *“My accounting class instructor has been calling me by my preferred name which made me feel very welcomed... She would write back in email and she'd just reuse the preferred name that is on display in Canvas. It made me feel very happy because like it felt like I was accepted, and I hoped that I would be in classes [where] other professors are similar to my accounting professor.”*
- *“I had a sign language class ... there were different signs [for] sexualities and even simply going over that list was really nice because they were signs for all of them, all the [identities].”*
- *“I've had the same counselor at De Anza and she's been really helpful ... she'll share experiences and stories with me ... just little things where she is open and vulnerable as well.”*
- *“I got involved because of LaDonna... My friends and I were encouraged to apply and then from there I just met a bunch of like-minded people who really pushed for LGBTQ+ advocacy as well as other social justice causes and so on.”*

Preferred pronouns were discussed again and participants felt instructors could positively influence and create welcoming spaces in the classroom.

- *“Something that's very underestimated, especially with like online learning is putting your pronouns in Canvas. That makes me feel like way more comfortable because I feel like seen by the professor.”*

- *“Yeah, I feel like a professor can help create a space where we can be authentically ourselves because they have the most control over the environment of the room... it's just more of that we've been saying, this word a lot, normalization [of pronouns and LGBTQ+ identities]. And it just like engrained into the class. But not like a major focus of the class but it's just like welcome.”*

For other participants, they could not readily identify welcoming spaces since their interaction with De Anza were limited. Participants attending in-person classes are awaiting for the campus to revive from the pandemic; and for those attending online, there is an opportunity for online spaces to create an intentional and welcoming environment for LGBTQ+ students.

- *“I'm not exactly sure there's a place that I feel not welcomed... I'm also waiting for the announcements and ... things to do. I love when we had all those booths ... and people would be singing out at the front near the food on certain days. And that was always really fun because everybody will be participating.”*
- *“Everything's been online ... so, it's really hard for me to say where in De Anza College that makes me feel most and least comfortable. But I can say that when I am in classes in which the teachers ... and they are willing to talk to me, then I feel really, really happy and I feel encouraged about that. Otherwise, I feel like in between comfortable and uncomfortable.”*

2B. On Campus/Online Spaces Where Participants Feel Least Welcomed

Participants were asked which De Anza spaces they have felt the least comfortable and welcomed. They were reminded to consider classroom instruction and student support services and resources, whether these spaces were on campus or online. **One focus group session discussed in length how breakout rooms/groups can be uncomfortable spaces because the discussions lack engagement or the group members did not have the skills to adequately facilitate discussions. Their discomfort in these spaces did not necessarily centered on their LGBTQ+ identities.**

- Participant 1: *“The breakout rooms are sometimes intimidating. Not every student participates in these breakout rooms and sometimes I don't feel that I have the support in the classes... I think it's so challenging to feel successful as a student in these breakout rooms... I don't know [whether] they [instructors] do check-ins throughout the different breakout rooms.”*
- Participant 2: *“I found that in breakout rooms, or groups in general, if someone doesn't take charge and initiate a discussion, then nothing happens.”*
- Participant 3: *“Sometimes there's just a lack of communication and engagement and one or two of us are just trying to figure it out. And I feel like I'm talking to a wall at times and other classmates won't reply for a few days. And I'm just like, ‘Where is the team, you know? Where are we?’ It can be stressful.”*

Another participant shared how the manner in which breakout groups were organized left them feeling singled out and uncomfortable. This participant provided examples of two different breakout group experiences: *“I was taking HUMA 10, Human Sexuality, and at one point in that class there was like a discussion where ... part of the assignment [was] to separate out into groups, male identified and female identified students ... and I was like I don't want to go into either of those groups I had the option of being like a third party and I did that, but I was the only one and I felt really uncomfortable for that*

entire discussion... I also took ... ICS 26 queer studies [Introduction to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Studies] ... and we also had to get into big groups. But instead of making it about gender, you can pick your own groups and it was [a] much better experience.” **When probed what the HUMA 10 instructor could have done differently, the participant suggested the discussion could have occurred without segregating by gender, or the instructor could have asked the entire class the discussion question, have one student respond and then toss the question to another student.**

The topic of preferred pronouns resurfaced as participants shared that preferred names or pronouns were not normalized in the classroom. This left them feeling uncomfortable and frustrated that their identity was being disregarded.

- *“In a class with strangers ... to have your pronouns out if it's not required or not everyone's doing it. So, it is kind of like just by choice, and I think I feel uncomfortable with that sometimes only because I feel like it is personal but it is a good thing to share.”*
- *“I had one professor last quarter. I don't think he understood that on Canvas my pronouns said they/them, but whenever I would email him and he forwarded my email to someone, he would use he/him for me, which was like how do I, you know, it's right there! Like you don't have an excuse.”*

Participants were uncomfortable in environments when it was unclear if others would be open-minded and accepting of other viewpoints or identities. As one participant phrased it: *“I think like cis-hetero-normativity is very normalized society. And even if it's not like outright like homophobia or xenophobia. We still live in a world where it's considered like normal to be like cisgender or heterosexual.”*

Participants reflected on whether instructors have the situational awareness and skills to appropriately address disparaging comments. These distressing encounters left them feeling unaccepted, unsafe and even threatened.

- *“We're [class group discussion] talking about money and ... wealth distribution is greatly linked with factors like race, gender, sexuality and all that. Someone said something about, I think it was about gender, and then like a microaggression. And because of that microaggression about certain gender I just did not want to go into that direction... Sometimes, it's like walking on eggshells because if you bring up this certain opinion in front of a person, you could potentially be putting yourself in danger. Or at the [very] least they will start acting very aggressively against you.”*
- *“Professors don't shut down and correct students' comments on different things... professors will sort of like move on and not shut it down and correct it either because they don't know what's wrong with that or because they don't want to bother and so then you're sort of left sitting there like, ‘well shit like I know what this person thinks of me now.’ ”*

3. Mental Health Resources/Events Participants Would Like See

Participants were asked what mental health resources or activities they think would best meet the needs of LGBTQ+ students. They were encouraged to consider resources or activities that are already available at De Anza or ones they heard or experienced elsewhere. Their input are grouped under the following categories: (1) personal and mental health, (2) social health and community building and (3) campus awareness and education.

Personal and Mental Health

Participants' suggestions ranged from general access to personal hygiene and therapy to having therapists specifically for the LGBTQ+ community.

- *“A pad or tampon ... they [another college institution] gave those for free. They have a whole section of condoms, tampons [and] pads. I think that was really helpful. They didn't even ask questions.... I don't know if De Anza has someplace where people can go and get those types of things.”*
- *“Whenever they assigned me a therapist ... it's not necessarily someone who's LGBTQ-friendly or gender affirming. It's just whoever's on their list ... And it would be really nice if the college had resources to help find gender affirming, like actual LGBT-friendly therapists, and not just people who write it in their byline.”*
- *“Having a mental health professional who is queer ... much more comfortable than like talking to cis[gender] women about my trans struggles. Someone who's queer and has actually like walked in those shoes ... maybe including some kind of training or like general understanding about what it's like to be trans or queer from a trans or queer organization.”*

Use of preferred pronouns emerged again as one participant shared their frustration with the inability to systematically use their preferred pronouns in healthcare environments, and suggested that De Anza designates a person to help students navigate changing their preferred names/pronouns. Additionally, the language used on healthcare intake forms could be more trauma-informed and gender affirming.

- *“I think some of the biggest thing about the pronoun usage... especially in a healthcare setting because the doctor's office is one of the few places that I still have to use my legal name ... I've just had to like out myself for no reason to somebody who's not going to communicate the message anyway and it's going to get yelled out loud in front of everyone and it's just this whole thing.... It's something that definitely keeps me from wanting to go.... When you're filling out the paperwork and they're [healthcare provider] asking you about high risk sexual activities, a lot of queer stuff is involved in there. And so it almost [makes you] feel like you're coming in as a deviant.... Because they [paperwork] make it seem as if most queer acts are deviant.... It automatically makes you feel some kind of way and it makes you feel almost embarrassed to be in there ... I think the only place I've ever gone where I've had like really affirming care [and] I would come back to was Planned Parenthood. They were trauma-informed and so understanding ... that has not been my experience in any center like on a school campus or private or otherwise.”*

Social Health and Community Building

Desire to connect with other LGBTQ+ students reiterated the importance of LGBTQ+ representation and being among LGBTQ+ community.

- *“I think it would be really, really amazing if De Anza can offer weekly or bi-weekly or even monthly meetings just for LGBTQ+ [students].”*
- *“I'm not sure if there are any events on campus that are geared towards LGBTQ+ awareness.”*
- *“Having a spiritual outlet of some kind ... that's a safe place for people to still practice whatever faith they believe and ... still maintain their [LGBTQ+] identity ... It helps our mental health having a place of worship of some sort.”*

- *“Getting them [transient students] engaged with a broader community at large. Again foster a sense of community that could help them greatly and kind of remedy the fact that they're only there [at De Anza] for such a temporary time; that we can keep those connections going with other [off-campus] groups.”*

Campus Awareness and Education

- *“I feel like there should be some like base level of education [of identities and pronouns] ... like all the professors can have where they can just integrate into their classes.”*
- *“I think [having an] easy pathway to allyship as well, like resources to educate people who maybe want to be better allies. I know De Anza does some great work in other areas like educating people who want to be allies to black and brown folks and members of the AAPI community. Like for those of us who want to be better educated and become better allies, I feel like there's some decent pathways De Anza offers on those fronts. I'm not sure that I've seen something similar for LGBTQ people ... I think that can be even really helpful for members of the LGBTQ+ community. I think that gay men in particular have a lot of privilege that is not afforded to trans people and bisexual people. And I think the allyship is something that it's not just for straight people. It's something that I think we need to grow within the queer community as well.”*

APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT PROCESS

The winter 2022 focus group recruitment began in December 2021. A random group of 8,000 students who enrolled between summer 2020 and fall 2021 (past 18 months) were emailed and asked to complete an interest form to provide input on LGBTQ+ mental health and well-being services. Students who identified with or allies of the LGBTQ+ community were encouraged to provide feedback. The recruitment process had two phases:

1. The interest form was emailed on December 15, 2021 and remained open through January 28, 2022. It was sent after finals week of the fall 2020 quarter to engage students while on break in hopes they would be less distracted. A reminder email was sent during the third week of winter 2022 quarter. The interest form gauged students' awareness of existing college mental health resources and solicited for preferred pronouns, LGBTQ+ identity and contact information.
2. Students who wanted to participate in the in-person or online focus groups were sent a follow-up form on February 10, 2022 to choose a preferred date. Attempts were made to group students with similar LGBTQ+ identities in the same session as well as provide general session of various LGBTQ+ identities. Students then received confirmation of their focus group date and an Adobe Sign consent form. A reminder email/text about the focus group session was sent the day prior to the session. For students who wanted to provide input via an online survey, the survey was emailed/texted on February 10, 2022 and a reminder on February 24, 2022. Students who provided only their phone number on their interest form were text the focus group/online survey information, whereas those who provided an email and phone number were emailed the information.

The spring 2022 focus group recruitment occurred between April 12, 2022 and April 18, 2022, where another set of random group of 8,000 students who enrolled at De Anza between summer 2020 and winter 2022 were emailed. The recruitment process for the spring focus group differed from winter focus group in five ways:

1. The recruitment period was shortened to one week in order to create urgency and reduce variability in students' schedule.³
2. Only general sessions of various LGBTQ+ identities were offered in order to provide more schedule offerings and flexibility to students.
3. Only online sessions was available since the majority of winter 2022 focus group participants preferred participating online.
4. Students were emailed a link to a web page where they could immediately sign up for a focus group session, which reduced the lead time required to confirm students' session.
5. Students who provided an email and phone number received text messaging about their session.

³ Some winter 2022 focus group students had expressed interest but were no longer available as date approached.

Recruitment Outcome & Actual Number of Focus Group Participants

The winter 2022 focus recruitment resulted in a total of 286 valid interests. To view the results from the interest form (see [Appendix D](#)) or online survey (see [Appendix E](#)). The number of students who expressed interest versus those who actually participated are provided below:

- (16) in-person focus group prospective participants vs. (2) actual participants
- (38) online focus group prospective participants vs. (7) actual participants
- (100) online survey prospective participants vs. (15) actual participants

The spring 2022 recruitment resulted in a total of 27 prospective online participants and had 18 actual participants, or a turnout rate of 67%, whereas the winter online turnout rate was 18% (7 out of 38). The overall winter 2022 focus group turnout rate (includes in person) was 17% (9 out of 54).

APPENDIX B: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of the focus group study is to learn what factors do LGBTQ+ students associate with positive mental health and what specific mental health resources or events do LGBTQ+ students want at the college. Questions were drafted and modified after a run-through with a convenient pool of test participants from the De Anza LGBTQ+ Alliance student club. Since the draft questions lacked opportunity for students to provide a working definition of positive mental health, the fall 2020 LGBTQ+ student survey was referenced and some factors that could be attributed to positive mental health were compiled. **Listed below are the questions asked of winter/spring 2022 focus group participants:**

1. Students shared in a fall 2020 LGBTQ+ survey some circumstances that helped them feel supported and connected at De Anza College. **Which of the following words are factors associated with positive mental health?** Are there words and phrases you would add to this list?
 - having representation of LGBTQ+
 - receiving support from non-LGBTQ+ faculty and students
 - having college spaces and events where LGBTQ+ students can feel safe and welcome
 - not being judged or scrutinized
 - acceptance of LGBTQ+ identities
 - open-mindedness, awareness and education about LGBTQ+ community
 - using pronouns and preferred names
 - having gender neutral restrooms
 - seeing LGBTQ+ people/community reflected in class materials
2. Reflecting on your participation at De Anza College (e.g., events, classes, programs, Zoom, Canvas, library, tutoring, resources, etc.):
 - **Where do you feel comfortable and most welcome? How does being in these welcoming spaces impact your mental health?**
 - **Where do you feel least comfortable? How does being in these non-welcoming spaces impact your mental health?**

- Students have mentioned they would like to see more mental health resources that support LGBTQ+ students. **What kinds of mental health resources or activities do you think would best meet the needs of LGBTQ+ students?** Your suggestions could include resources or activities that are already available at De Anza College or ones you heard or experienced elsewhere.

Participants were asked to introduce themselves and share their preferred names and pronouns as well as their LGBTQ+ identity. All participants were encouraged to share how long they have been a De Anza student, whether they took classes in person and/or online and when was the last time they were enrolled at the college. The purpose of the enrollment questions was to gauge whether participants had opportunities to interact with campus resources, support services or events given that instruction and student support services has been primarily online due to COVID-19. Attempts were made to have participants' make connections with their LGBTQ+ identity to the experiences they shared.

APPENDIX C: FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS' LGBTQ+ IDENTITY

A total of 27 students participated in the winter/spring 2022 focus groups. Most participants identified as male and gay (30%) or trans/non-binary and pansexual (11%), as well as were relatively new, enrolling at De Anza for the first time during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-21 or 2021-22 (N=16). The remaining 11 participants were returning students from over three years ago with some concurrently enrolled at four-year institutions or already in possession of a bachelor's degree and were continuing their education or changing careers. The majority of the participants had already experienced face-to-face/hybrid and online learning (N=18) with the remaining experiencing exclusively online (N=8) or exclusively face-to-face (N=1) learning.

Table 2:

LGBTQ+ Identity of Focus Group Participants

LGBTQ+ Identity	Headcount	Percent
Male_Gay or Lesbian	8	29.6%
Trans/Non-Binary_Pansexual	3	11.1%
Female_Asexual/Demisexual	2	7.4%
Female_Bisexual	2	7.4%
Trans/Non-Binary_Bisexual	2	7.4%
Trans/Non-Binary_Gay or Lesbian	2	7.4%
Female_Gay or Lesbian	1	3.7%
Female_Pansexual	1	3.7%
Female_Straight or Heterosexual	1	3.7%
Male_Bisexual	1	3.7%
Trans/Non-Binary_Lesbian	1	3.7%
Unknown gender_Bisexual	1	3.7%
Unknown gender_Gay or Lesbian	1	3.7%
Unknown gender_Unknown sexual orientation	1	3.7%
Total	27	100.0%

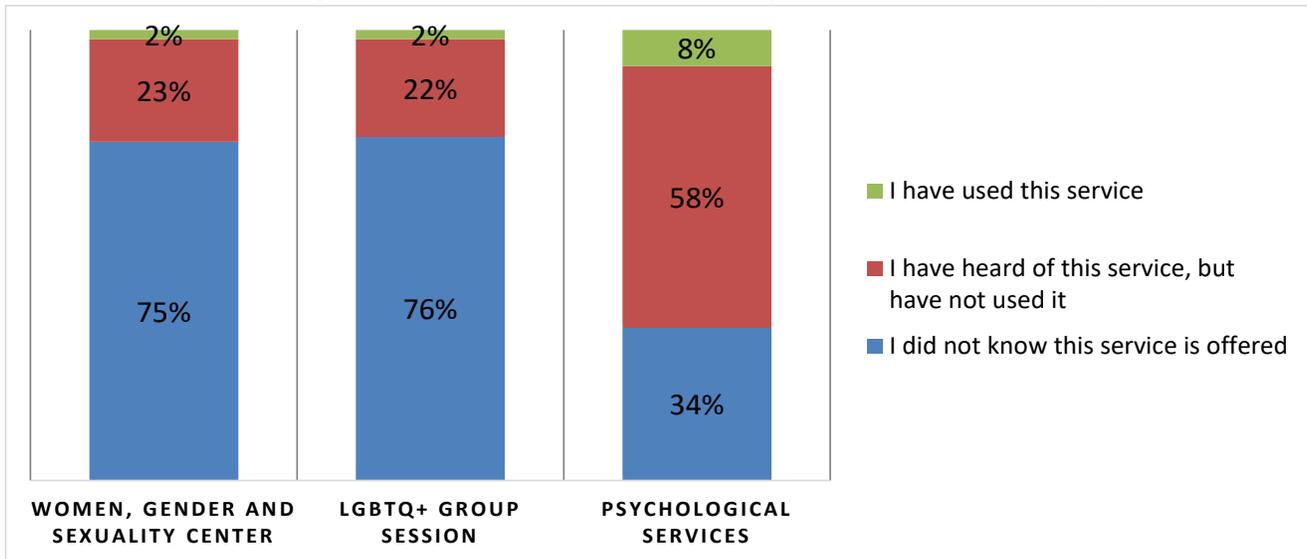
APPENDIX D: WINTER 2022 INTEREST FORM RESULTS

The LGBTQ+ Study Interest Form was emailed to all students who enrolled at De Anza between summer 2020 and fall 2021. The form remained open on December 15, 2021 through January 28,

2022. The results shown focuses on the respondents' awareness of existing health-related resources or events at the college.

Table 3:

Q: Listed below are mental health-related resources or events that are offered at De Anza College. Please indicate how familiar you are with each one. (N=286)



- About 25% (N=70) of respondents were aware about the Women, Gender and Sexuality Center and LGBTQ+ group session (support group provided by Psychological Services). With the majority of respondents unaware of these two services.
- 66% (N= 189) of respondents were aware of Psychological Services at the college: 23 have used the service and 166 heard about the service but have not used it.

APPENDIX E: WINTER 2022 ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS

Students who initially completed the interest form in December 2021/January 2022 and wanted to provide input via an online survey were emailed/texted the survey. The survey was administered between February 10, 2022 and February 24, 2022. A total of 13 respondents completed the survey.

Factors Survey Respondents Associated with Positive LGBTQ+ Mental Health

Respondents were asked to select any words from a list they felt could attribute to positive mental health, and prompted to add any words or phrases not already on the list. The top factors that survey respondents attributed to LGBTQ+ positive mental health included the following:

- **Not being judged or scrutinized (N=6) and Using pronouns and preferred names (N=6)**
- **Having gender neutral restrooms (N=5)**
- **Receiving support from non-LGBTQ+ faculty and students (N=4) and Seeing LGBTQ+ people/community reflected in class materials (N=4)**

Table 4:

Factors Respondents Associated with Positive Mental Health

Factors	Responses	Percent
Not being judged or scrutinized	6	16.2%
Using pronouns and preferred names	6	16.2%
Having gender neutral restrooms	5	13.5%
Receiving support from non-LGBTQ+ faculty and students	4	10.8%
Seeing LGBTQ+ people/community reflected in class materials	4	10.8%
Having college spaces and events where LGBTQ+ students can feel safe and welcome	3	8.1%
Acceptance of LGBTQ+ identities	3	8.1%
Having representation of LGBTQ+	3	8.1%
Open-mindedness, awareness and education about LGBTQ+ community	2	5.4%
Other: Having LGBTQ+ specific community spaces	1	2.7%
Other: Having LGBTQ+ specific resources available	0	0.0%
Total	37	100.0%

Not being judged or scrutinized

- *“Not being judged or scrutinized. [This] phrasing is simple and easy to understand. It tells me the space is safe and there is minimal risk for harm and judgment. It does not exclude or limit anyone’s identities or pronouns, nor does it gate keep anyone from understanding or feeling like they need to fit in to use the space or service. Being judged and/or scrutinized in the LGBT community happens constantly, even in the most accepted of cities, so just knowing judgment and scrutiny is not allowed would alleviate pressures and anxiety so many in the LGBT community (myself included) face.”*
- *“My favorite phrase above is "not being judged or scrutinized." I try to think of positive mental health both in and out of the LGBTQ community. Everyone deserves to be true to themselves and not judged by others, regardless of whether they are LGBTQ or not.”*

Using pronouns and preferred name/Having gender neutral restrooms

- *“Support also comes in these allies using the correct pronouns and the preferred names, which not only helps me feel understood and safe, but also helps in getting me more engaged in class and not having to worry about being judged.”*
- *“A person should not have to make the panic-inducing decision of which bathroom to use when there is not a safe bathroom option available to them. I feel very strongly that EVERY place that offers public restrooms absolutely needs to have gender-neutral restrooms available. I don't even think it should be an option.”*
- *“Pronouns/preferred names asked for and used; dedicated spaces; representation; inclusion in course materials; gender-neutral bathrooms. These structural and institutional shifts from those in a position of power are a good part of what will change minds and attitudes, ensuring greater acceptance and respect.”*

Receiving support from non-LGBTQ+ faculty and students

- *“The most important aspects are the individual impacts that the attitude of the faculty and other students have towards people in the LGBT community. The second people stop feeling safe to be themselves is when mental health takes a sharp decline. There are many possible things that could be done for this, though De Anza already seems like a somewhat inclusive place.”*

- *"Receiving support from non-LGBTQ faculty and students" is the one that best describe positive mental health for me because this makes the classroom environment feel safer. The support from allies of the community is huge in helping make my experience feel more normal and for me to feel more accepted."*

Seeing LGBTQ+ people/community reflected in class materials

- *"Seeing LGBTQ people/community reflected in class materials since it'll help make me feel safer being more open around my peers and teachers without worrying about needing to hide. Also being able to see other queer people in history or class material would make me feel more confident in my ability to succeed."*
- *"Receiving support and seeing community reflected in class materials (i.e. acknowledgment of community contributions and history)."*

On Campus/Online Spaces Where Survey Respondents Feel Welcomed

Spaces where respondents felt welcomed and comfortable at De Anza were in person (N=6), followed by online (N=5) and both in person and online (N=2). **Respondent felt welcomed when their identities were respected and affirmed. They felt safe and comfortable when they could be themselves.**

- *"All of my classes are very welcoming and respectful of everyone's identity (Korean, Asian arts history, linguistics). It makes me feel comfortable in my own skin so to speak my identity is validated."*
- *"In courses in which LGBTQ identities are normalized—in which using preferred names and pronouns are a matter of course and LGBTQ people, culture, and issues are discussed with nuance and without being tokenized or pathologized."*
- *"I feel most welcome at the LGBTQ club meetings. It helps me mentally because there are people like me there, people I can relate to and who value my perspective and opinion as a queer person. I am much less likely to feel like an outsider and much more likely to feel that I and others around me are being treated with respect. Both conditions are much more conducive to investment in the community and have better learning outcomes."*
- *"The library because it promotes multiculturalism. I feel supported at campus."*
- *"At De Anza I felt most welcomed within the IMPACT [AAPI] Program. It helped me feel like I wasn't alone and [people] understood me. I didn't have to offer up much explanation about who I am."*

On Campus/Online Spaces Where Survey Respondents Feel Least Welcomed

Spaces where respondents felt unwelcomed and uncomfortable at De Anza were both in person online (N=4), followed by in person (N=3) and online (N=1). **Unwelcoming spaces made them feel anxious and invalidated, and in some cases, withdrew from learning.**

- *In spaces in which people deny the validity of others' identity and the existence of oppression for marginalized groups. I am far more likely to be triggered and have more difficulty with learning. I withdrew from a course that was [a] requisite for earning a certificate."*
- *I had this teacher last quarter... I didn't feel welcome in her class. She didn't give trigger warnings, and while she said nothing [explicit], her views of those considered 'outside the norm, queer people, neurodivergent people, etc.' were very outdated. Awful, I didn't pay attention at all in class."*

Some respondents mentioned they felt unwelcomed in spaces such as administrator's office, staff's office and financial aid. However, it is unclear whether these spaces were general comments, unrelated to their LGBTQ+ identities or not.

- *“They [administrator's offices] are the least understanding, rude, snappy, judgmental people hands down. They make enrollment, financial aid, and anything requiring the meeting with administrators extremely difficult. They have vast knowledge of extremely bureaucratic forms and processes and don't bother explaining; assuming we somehow have the same level of understanding.... it's clear their annoyance carries over to us. The impact is anxiety, stress, the feeling of being stupid, lack of empathy, lack of respect; I feel the judgement, and it shows me that admin at the college couldn't care less about us.”*
- *“It just adds to my stress because I feel like the people behind the [financial aid or office staff] desks don't care about my well-being.”*

Mental Health Resources/Events Survey Respondents Would Like See

Survey respondents were asked to provide mental health resources or activities they think would best meet the needs of LGBTQ+ students, and encouraged to consider resources or activities that are already available at De Anza or ones they heard or experienced elsewhere. Their input are grouped under the following categories: (1) personal and mental health, (2) social health and community building and (3) campus awareness and education.

Personal and Mental Health

- *“Having affirmative supplies or health items for LGBTQ members of the community such as menstrual products.”*
- *“Maybe a counselor who's field specializes with LGBT area, or maybe historically had more work with LGBT people. Financial literacy for LGBT students kicked out of their homes from homophobic/abusive families. Career guidance that shows us the employers that have a history of protecting their LGBT employees or actively avoiding discrimination.”*

Social Health and Community Building

- *“Maybe an event where we all get together and paint/socialize with each other. I find that art can be really therapeutic when there's no expectation but to put pen to paper.”*
- *“Materials and strategies to cope with low familial support and form strong relationship bonds with others on campus.”*

Campus Awareness and Education

- *“It would be nice if faculty would be more informed and up-to-date on respecting students. Maybe include pronouns in class introductions. Staff and teachers can introduce their own pronouns, too!”*
- *“Perhaps more Pride-type events where we can celebrate diverse identities?”*
- *“Outreach to instructors about how to better serve the needs of LGBTQ students.”*
- *“Ways to report homophobic/transphobic faculty or students, counseling.”*