This academic year the Women’s Center continued to advance gender equity and inclusion at Northwestern by supporting women and other marginalized faculty, staff, and students. We strengthened our capacity by hiring a new Program Manager, Dr. Sarah Brown, whose academic background and prior experience at Brown University’s Women’s Center contribute to our center’s programmatic and educational objectives. We also welcomed our new Program Coordinator, Melisa Stephen, a 2015 Weinberg alum, who majored in Gender and Sexuality Studies. Melisa is an artist and a community organizer who has returned to Northwestern and the Women’s Center to put their Northwestern education into action and to support the day-to-day operations and financial management of the Center. We are pleased to also have launched a new initiative that aims to support feminist artists, activists, and/or academics for a one-year residency at our Chicago Women’s Center. We selected our inaugural 2020-21 Feminist in Residence fellow Hankyeol Song, who is a Chicago-based activist and documentary filmmaker. Our work this past year was propelled by new energies but also by the longstanding accomplishments and leadership of our senior staff. Associate Director Njoki Kamau launched a Solution Focused Feminist Coaching Program, and she was selected as Northwestern’s 2020 Jean E. Shedd University Citizenship Award recipient. Director Sekile Nzinga was honored by the Evanston YWCA as a 2019 YWoman of the Year and completed her second book. She was also selected to the National Women’s Studies Association’s governing council and began serving as the university’s Interim Chief Diversity Officer and Interim Associate Provost for Diversity and Inclusion.

Our staff harnessed our collective expertise as we maintained two campus centers and created robust virtual programming and leadership in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In each of these environments we worked to provide support services and advocacy as well as educational programming to all those who face gender oppression, including students, staff, and faculty who are nonbinary, queer, trans, and women. Our diverse programs and support services have gender equity at their center and integrate intersectional feminist approaches to social justice as their shared method of approach.

Mission

The Women’s Center is committed to advancing gender equity and inclusion by engaging the Northwestern University community. As catalysts for change, we foster the development of individual and collective strengths to cultivate socially responsible students, staff and faculty.

Goals

1. To serve as a feminist space that cultivates and activates skills which NNto advance equity and inclusion;
2. To advance social justice by raising awareness, increasing knowledge, and building capacity and community;
3. To build alliances, promote collaboration, and foster a shared commitment to effectively serve and support women, trans and non-binary people at Northwestern;
4. To engage our community through programming, support services, and advocacy around issues impacting women and other marginalized groups;
5. To educate the Northwestern community on contemporary and historical feminist and gender issues;

Staff

Director: Dr. Sekile Nzinga-Johnson
Associate Director: Njoki Kamau
Director of Programs: Sarah Brown
Program Coordinator: Melisa Stephen
Work Study Students for 2019-2020: Sherlina Chauhan, Aaliyah Berryman, Meghna Gaddam, Lucy Yang
Graduate Program Assistant: Chloe Jones
We also are a site for feminist intellectual engagement and knowledge production. We approached our annual theme—By Degrees: Gender. Education. And Progress—with direct attention to the persistent threats to equity in higher education while also expanding the notion of education to include cultural and familial spaces of learning. We fully redesigned our website this year to create greater accessibility to our services.

Three fourths of our full-time staff have joined the Women’s Center over the course of the past three years. This period of great transition presented opportunities for expanding the scope of the center’s work and strengthening existing operations and programming. The new director Dr. Nzinga has identified 5 keys areas of focus: feminist leadership, support and advocacy, collaborations and coalitions, programming and education, and community and connection. The Women’s Center established new partnerships and took the lead on several campus wide initiatives this academic year, which continues to raise its profile with the campus community.
### Section I. Introduction and Administrative Overview

**A. Staff.** The Women’s Center is staffed by Director Dr. Sekile Nzinga (she/her/they), Associate Director Njoki Kamau (she/her), Program Manager Dr. Sarah Brown (she/her), and Program Coordinator Melisa Stephen (they/them). We were joined this year by four total work study student staff: Sherlina Chauhan (fall), Aaliyah Berryman (fall and winter), Lucy Yang (winter), and Meghna Gaddam (winter). And briefly by one Graduate Program Assistant, C.J. Jones (spring). We also benefit from having a graduate student, Lauren Herold, who volunteers at the Center from time to time.

**B. Programs.** The Women’s Center is engaged in a host of programming and initiatives that range from support services, speaking engagements, events, workshops, un-programming, trainings, and collaborations. Sections II & III will elaborate on our accomplishments and identified areas of support needed to sustain our future educational programming to support faculty, staff, and students.

**C. Measures of Success.** The Women’s Center utilizes a host of measures to evaluate our work. We solicit feedback formally and informally and consider quantitative data like rate of
attendance and participant feedback. Sections II & III will include examples of our successes from the year as well as our areas of growth.

Section II: AY 2019-2020

A. Accomplishments/Highlights

**Gender Queer Trans Nonbinary Task Force Report and Trans Inclusive Initiatives at Northwestern (both campuses)**

The 2018-2019 Women's Center served in leadership capacity on the GQTNB Task Force. This year those efforts came to fruition with the public announcement of the task force report, which was co-authored by the Center Director and Task Force Co-Chair Sekile Nzinga. The Director is now leading and providing guidance for the planning and implementation phases of trans inclusive initiatives that are derived from the task force report. She is currently working with HR, IT, the Registrar, MSA, ARD, Global Marketing and Communications, the Wildcard Office, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Facilities, Radio, Television and Film, OIDI, The Office of Equity, Health Services, and the Campus Accommodations Council as they move towards trans inclusive policies and practices. In addition, the Women's Center has been identified as an action leader within the report and have begun its own planning and implementation phases of the recommendations. This includes its proposal to change the center's name to “The Center for Women and Gender Equity” to reflect the center’s current scope of work and signals the center as a welcoming space for trans, gender non-conforming, and non-binary faculty, staff and students.

**Feminist in Residence Fellowship Program (both campuses- emphasis in Chicago)**

The Women's Center solicited applications for our inaugural Feminist in Residence Fellow in spring of 2020. Of the many qualified applicants, our search committee comprised of staff and Women’s Center advisory board members, selected Hankyeol Song. **Song will join the University with a wealth of engaging programmatic ideas and building ties between the Women's Center and spaces of “feminist collectivity and liberation politics” across Chicago.** Song also will be engaging the campus community through film and capturing the experience in documentary form.

The Northwestern University Women’s Center Feminist-in-Residence Fellowship Program invites scholars, practitioners, artists, activists, and educators to campus for one academic year to further their independent feminist work, and incubate project(s) that are aligned with and further the Women's Center mission and goals. The aim of the fellowship, which was conceptualized by Center Director Sekile Nzinga, is to engage Northwestern undergraduate and graduate students, staff, faculty, and community members during the residency and to further connections between the Center and broader community work.

**Annual Keynote Address: By Degrees: Gender. Education. And Progress. (live in Evanston, live streamed with participation in Chicago)**

Dr. Yolanda Flores Niemann of the University of North Texas served as the Keynote speaker to kick off our programming year on the theme By Degrees: Gender. Education. And Progress. Her talk was co-sponsored by our partners in the Latino and Latina Studies Program, One Book One Northwestern, The Graduate School, OIDI, The Kreeger-Wolfe Fund, and the Searle Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning. A pre-talk reception before the event allowed Dr. Niemann to meet with students, staff, faculty, and Evanston community members who were in attendance.
Dr. Niemann’s talk emphasized persistent barriers for women of color in faculty positions and called upon allies to take up the work of opposing tokenism and devaluation of women of color colleagues. Our Center livestreamed the event at our Chicago Women’s Center, and attendees on the Chicago campus were able to engage in the Q & A portion of the Evanston campus event.

We built opportunities throughout the day to highlight Dr. Niemann’s expertise with faculty. Dr Veronica Womack at the Searle Center facilitated a recorded interview with Yolanda that will contribute to Veronica’s National Science Foundation grant-funded research on women of color in higher education.

The Women’s Center also convened a select group of students, staff, and faculty working for equity and inclusion for women, trans, and nonbinary people in higher education and particularly for Latinx students and scholars. This space of affirmation and open dialogue was a highlight of the day for many who were able to attend and serves as model for maximizing campus visitors in the future.

**Covid-19 Mutual Aid Guide (online)**

Women’s Center compiled a robust open-source resource for providing and receiving mutual aid in the early days of the health crisis. This potentially life-saving guide has been linked to and utilized by many on- and off-campus partners. During this unprecedented time, the Women’s Center continues our mission to advance gender equity and to support women, trans, and non-binary people at Northwestern even as we adjust and reimagine the work ahead. We are here, but we also understand that the COVID-19 pandemic will likely magnify and exacerbate structural inequities and will affect marginalized communities differently.

In response to the social, economic, and medical global crisis due to COVID-19, we compiled a comprehensive list of resources to support those in need, even while many are away from campus. We also included opportunities for those who wish to safely offer mutual aid to others in our community.

The Women’s Center, Learning and Organization Development, HR Well Being, and the Office of Equity work together to offer the new series: *Caring for Ourselves and Others as We Navigate Change: A New Staff Dialogue Series*. This biweekly series on topics particular to the pandemic and remote work has been consistently well attended and well-reviewed in post discussion surveys. Recently it has expanded to include guest speakers from other parts of the University.

**B. Workshops & Programs**

The Women’s Center has developed a wealth of original programming in both spaces and targeted several distinct populations. This year we added transitioning online programming in accordance with university and CDC social distancing guidelines.

**Solution-Focused Feminist Coaching (both centers)**

Associate Director Njoki Kamau formalized her years of experience in coaching and mentorship into a program that has been running at full capacity since its first day. Faculty, staff, and students all take advantage of Njoki’s five-session support system.

The goal of the program is to provide faculty, students, and staff opportunities to focus on goals that enrich their lives and advance their aspirations at Northwestern. The process involves individuals
defining desired outcomes and then constructing pathways in both thinking and action to achieve their respective goals. This occurs through collaborative dialogue between the coach and the person.

Coaching sessions normally last for up to an hour, for a total of five meetings. During that time, the individual will be supported and guided by the coach to map their way forward.

**Feminist First Year (Evanston)**

This year we replaced the Wildcat Welcome RA tours of the Center with a more targeted and integrated approach to orientation for new and transfer students.

We held two Feminist First Year events at our Evanston center occurring in the afternoon and the evening. Both events opened with a reception with snacks and socializing. Invited student leaders and staff, who offer critical support to students, shared their work with the new students and answered questions. The new students were able to learn about campus clubs like SHAPE, MARS, and Planned Parenthood Generation Action (among others) and hear from staff representatives from CAPS, CARE, and Equity. New students were invited into our community room to craft feminist art for their living spaces with materials provided by our center. We created a special playlist to keep the atmosphere fun and reflective. Many students left their painted artwork at the center to dry (it was raining) and Center staff were able to informally interview them about their experience when they returned to retrieve it. We also conducted a survey using our sign-in list and received overwhelmingly positive reviews, with the one criticism being that our library space is insufficient to house the level of interest we received.

This new event will create a cohort of students annually who will intimately learn about and benefit from the support of the Women’s Center throughout their time at Northwestern. This level of outreach and engagement encourages student leaders to work together and aid them in their efforts to recruit new students. We believe it serves also as a valuable space for new and continuing students to forge new connections based on aligned values across disciplinary and programmatic divides.

**Women, Trans, and Nonbinary Graduate Students of Color Support Group (Evanston)**

The Women’s Center sponsored and supported a new student support group for graduate women, nonbinary, and trans students of color. The support group has served as an example of the Women’s Center’s role in creating bridges throughout the campus community. The group’s graduate student leadership was brought together when one student expressed a need to our Program Manager over the summer, and two leaders of the Black Graduate Student Association expressed a similar absence of support when meeting with the same staffer at the TGS open house in early fall 2019.

This group met monthly and exceeded its mandate to create community by creating a program of journal writing and peer accountability and support, using funds from our center and co-sponsorship through funding which we helped them to acquire from TGS and GSS.

The group engages in critical peer to peer and affinity-based retention programming for underrepresented minority students. This promising initiative requires compensated graduate student staffing to ensure unsustainability beyond the group’s founding members. Ideally, the Women’s Center could obtain a standing Graduate Assistant line in order to serve to build intersectional graduate programming and other retention initiatives for graduate women, trans, and nonbinary students. While the Center continues to build top-down programming for the
graduate student community, this aspect of the work benefits from peer informed and facilitated programming.

STEM Kids Story Time (Evanston—open to public)
In partnership with One Book. One Northwestern, we hosted a children’s STEM event at our Evanston Women’s Center. We were honored to have engineering Professor Ange-Therese Okono & molecular bio-science Professor Heather Pinkett read stories about women of color in science and engineering. The professors then responded to questions about pursuing a career in science.

The event also entailed providing developmentally appropriate activities like women in science coloring books pages and crayons for younger attendees and a game of matching descriptions of extraordinary scientific breakthroughs to the women who achieved them for older children and parents.

The concluding activity was a group demonstration of “thrust”. Using illustrations, we explained how thrust takes rockets to the moon and then had the young participants conduct an experiment to demonstrate the concept.

The families in attendance included families of staff, faculty, and families from the neighborhood. The event was covered by campus radio and the center received positive feedback from our One Book. One Northwestern partners and Professors Okono and Pinkett.

Providing free and engaging family activities with a message of gender equity and empowerment is a good way to engage parents at Northwestern and beyond. This promising pilot has encouraged our Center to continue is long standing commitment to working parents and provides an opportunity to strengthen our partnerships with the Student Affairs working parents’ groups and the Office of Well-being.

Batwoman Wednesdays (Evanston)
In an attempt to engage LGBTQI students and create informal programming, we screened the new television show Batwoman, which features an openly queer woman superhero, at our Evanston Center every Wednesday during the fall in partnership with the undergraduate student group Rainbow Alliance. This “un-programming” encouraged students to socialize and rest rather than build new initiatives and take on added stress.

The partnership started strong, with our first airing being featured as part of Rainbow Week, but attendance fizzled over the quarter. Possible causes might be: 1) this particular show is available for free to anyone with an internet connection, 2) we aired the show after its live airdate, 3) TV watching has simply become a less communal activity, 4) we have work to do to signal to students that the Women’s Center is their space.

One objective of this program was to signal to LGBTQIA+ students that the Women’s Center is yet another space where we hope they will feel welcome. A lesson learned from the experience is to offer programming that is not easily available to students elsewhere.

Lunch N’ Learn for Chicago Staff (Chicago)
To engage colleagues at our Chicago Center we created this lunch n’ learn series similar to brown bag discussions with the director from years past. The events consisted of a facilitated conversation on a chosen topic during the lunch hour with light snacks provided.
The first Lunch N’ Learn event was on *Supporting Your Trans and Nonbinary Colleagues* and was led by Kate Harrington-Rosen of the Office of Equity.

For our second lunch n’ learn event we partnered with the office of well-being to offer discussions on both campuses on the subject of *Parenting for Social Justice*. Both events were attended at maximum capacity. A few colleagues in Chicago and several in Evanston expressed a desire to grow this discussion into a regular group in the future in their post event surveys.

**A Space for Us (Chicago)**

The Women’s Center utilized data from the 2017 Staff Engagement survey to create critical retention programming for Black women staff, who reported the highest level of job dissatisfaction at Northwestern compared to other groups. Because the Women’s Center has only four staff who serve two campuses, Dr. Veronica Womack offered to facilitate an innovative evidence-based support group, *A Space for Us*, to engage and support Black women staff on the Chicago campus. Dr. Womack develops an evidence-based curriculum in 2018, which is grounded in social psychology to offer impactful retention programming for Black staff women on the Chicago campus. She has run the series for 2 years. This year she expanded the program by offering two new guest sessions with guest speaker Meredith Carnethon speaking on “Leading from Where you Are” and Sekile Nzinga on “Creating and Sustaining Squad Care”.

Unfortunately, we were forced to cease the *A Space for Us* retention program for Black staff women on the Chicago campus due to limitations on our ability to use our operating budget toward add-pay to compensate Dr. Womack.

**Families in Transition (Evanston—open to public)**

To demonstrate our commitment to trans inclusive programming, the Women’s Center worked with Block Cinema and the Queer Pride Graduate Student Association to screen two short films and a Q&A with the directors. This program brought together two documentary stories about families navigating the complexities of gender across generational and cultural lines. Oli Rodriguez’s autobiographical documentary *Lyndale* and André Pérez’s web series *America in Transition* episode “A Family Matter,” were screened, and Pérez and Rodriguez discussed their films and their experiences as trans filmmakers. The event was additionally supported by our partners at the Kaplan Institute for the Humanities, the Sexualities Project at Northwestern, and the Gender and Sexuality Studies program. The screening was well attended and received positive press.

**New Moms / New Parents (both campuses)**

The Women’s Center continued to run the New Mom’s Group facilitated by Program Coordinator Suzie Campbell until her departure in October. Sarah Brown, the center’s new program manager, then changed to “New Parents” to better reflect our center’s commitment to parents that do not identify as mothers (whatever their reproductive role) and to further encourage the notion that men are equally invested in and responsible for nurture and care in the family unit. The group did well under the volunteer facilitation of Postdoc Miriam Deutsch in Evanston and facilitation by Sekile Nzinga in Chicago.

The program may have run its course at the center. Staff and faculty parents are finding informal support in the working parents group run by the Office of Well-Being. This programming does not, however, serve as a resource for graduate student parents. Next academic year, the center will explore building our Parenting for Social justice one-time program into an ongoing group that meets regularly and is open to graduate students, staff, and faculty parents and caregivers.
Porchlight Workshops- Social Media Impact on Sexual Violence Survivors (both centers)
The Women’s Center worked with our campus partners to build programming around MLK Dream week speaker Tarana Burke. Open discussions of sexual violence require scaffolding before and after to support the needs of everyone in our community. To this end, the Women’s Center supplied lunch with funds from the Your Life Wellness Grant at both of our campus centers and hosted a speaker from Porchlight, a Chicago-based sexual violence survivor counseling and resource center, to speak on the impact of social media on sexual violence survivors. The Q&A on both campuses was very productive and practical. Staff in particular wanted to know what to say if a student confided a desire to disclose on social media or was coping with its effects. Tera Gurney, our speaker, gave an even view of the personal risks of public disclosure and the potential for building support and affirmation. She emphasized platforms built specifically for survivors.

Disclosures in the Time of #MeToo (Evanston- streamed in Chicago)
The Center for Awareness, Response, and Education and the Women’s Center co-sponsored this event built also to address the need for context surrounding the visit of Tarana Burke. Legal Scholar and Pritzker faculty Deb Tuerkheimer spoke about public and/or online disclosures of sexual harassment or assault. Like our Porchlight speaker, Professor Tuerkheimer’s work is survivor-centered and does not discourage any one method of survivors seeking validation or assistance. Her talk emphasized the motivating factors for public disclosure, including the absence of faith in means of formal reporting and justice. She also covered questions of liability or slander counterclaims. This talk was held on the Evanston campus streamed the next day in Chicago. We offered confidential supports on both campus by partnering with CARE and EAP.

International Women’s Day (Evanston)
In celebration of the global event—International Women’s Day—the Women’s Center co-hosted a reception with Buffet Institute for Global Affairs that was open to the campus community. The event highlighted the talents and contributions of our students and staff, including our associate Director, Njoki Kamau and our work study students, and featured international women’s rights and feminist organizations in need of support.

This year, we took efforts in our marketing and closing remarks to extend the purpose of the day to include all those who face gender oppression. The event’s attendance was impacted by the campus wide announcement to suspend large events in order to limit the spread of COVID-19, which was issued right at the start of our event. Still, we had moderate attendance and it was a positive and uplifting community gathering from which to transition to the following months of relative isolation and collective loss.

Moving forward, we plan to bring back our Shujaa award to award the advancements in gender equity and inclusion achieved by a member of NU staff. We will also prepare collectively so that we are trans inclusive throughout the event.

Annual Women’s History Month Symposium: By Degrees: Gender, Education, And Progress. Symposia (Evanston, Video recorded for Chicago/Online)
Our annual symposium was organized to coincide with the Buffet Institute’s Gender Justice in Digital Life Working Group’s Founding Meeting. The coinciding event was intended to bring people from across the campus, the nation and the international community in conversation about the incremental progress made towards gender equity in university settings, identify new and persistent challenges, and to chart a way forward. The event was organized to feature a welcome by
the Women’s Center Director, Sekile Nzinga, opening remarks by the Executive director of the National Women’s Studies Association, Deana Lewis, followed by a panel discussion amongst five current or recent directors of Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Centers: Natalie Bennett (UIC); Kaitlyn Legg (University of Rochester), Angela Clarke Taylor (Case Western University) and Ann Russo (DePaul University). Our guests were invited to engage the topic of gender and education and the role of Women, Gender and Sexuality Centers on college campuses, reflecting on the relationship between Centers and Gender and Sexuality Studies Department, the present and historical ways Centers act as sites of education, and the ways in which Centers propel the campuses and communities to which they belong into action around equity and equality.

The Symposium was originally planned for March 11th and was postponed due to the suspension of all large events due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We reimagined the event for online participation slated for May 15th.

Unfortunately, the May 15th online symposium was the subject of a vicious, illegal, and deliberate cyber-attack in which our more than sixty attendees present at an early stage of the event were exposed to videos of child sexual abuse. This incursion has interrupted our work in numerous ways. While we continue to provide for the communities that rely on us, we have also taken on the very real work of participating in an active criminal investigation, seeking greater IT security, and seeking to limit the harm done to those in attendance, including our entire staff and many campus partners, on the day of the event.

On the day of the attack our campus partners, even while distraught, rose to our aid. Most notably Kate Harrington Rosen, Director of Outreach at the Office of Equity, assumed the responsibility of notifying the NUPD and compiling immediate resources to people who had been on the Zoom. Kanika Wadhwa, a CAPS therapist who specializes in supporting sexual assault survivors, offered crisis support following the first attack to attendees in one of the symposium breakout rooms but the second attack halted her attempts to provide emergency care. While our staff, of course, worked to provide a statement and supply contacts, this layer of partnership and immediate support was instrumental to our capacity to handle the situation as swiftly and with as little residual harm as possible. We also learned that we received meaningful support in the form of advocacy for acknowledgement and assistance to our unit from Gender and Sexuality Studies, and Professors Radway and Paola Zamperini in particular. Carrie Wachter, the Director of CARE, also gave generously of her time to build a structure of post-traumatic support.

To offer responsive and trauma informed support, we joined CARE and hired an external trauma therapist from Resilience to hold an online session two weeks after the cancelled event. All the attendees we could verify from the participant list were invited. Attendance was low but the meeting was very emotional. CARE and Resilience emphasized the importance of a swift response to a traumatic event (faster than two weeks); however, with no built-in institutional support mechanisms or contingencies for an event like this we were forced to improvise to the best of our abilities while also ensuring our own staff has access to mental health care. Please see “structural impediments” for further reflection on the needs for in-place support mechanisms for staff and faculty in times of crisis.

As further context, entrance to our event was gained by a person or persons who registered using the name of a real Northwestern employee linked to an unauthorized (non-NU) but not especially suspicious email. Once in the space, the hacker was able to change their name to other people on the call, including a member of our staff which may have resulted in them receiving host controls once we reopened the event. They were able to duplicate, triplicate, and so on their registration in
the final moments before we reached a critical mass on the call. Contrary to reports in the Daily (taken from an attendee with no way of knowing otherwise) our screen sharing function was disabled and this was not a technological hack of the Zoom platform. This type of cyber-attack was achieved by a person aiming their webcam at a second screen and pinning their screen, and even doing so with multiple accounts so that if one is removed, the images continue. This form of hacking requires a good deal of planning and intentionality as demonstrated by disguising one’s self as a known entity. In sum, the capacity for this kind of attack on Zoom is not a bug but a feature of its accessibility. 

Since this incident, we have held Zoom events that only permit registrants with NU accounts. Our capacity to public-facing programming and the scope of the center’s work is therefore deeply inhibited by our status as target for misogynistic acts of cyber violence. The attacks are under investigation by the FBI. The planned remarks of our director and possibly our speakers will be released over time on our blog.

**Additional Programs**

- The Women’s Center staff engaged in a three-day retreat in Oak Park in September of 2019. We used this time to hone our mission, develop our performance excellence and center goals, reflect on the prior year, and to begin planning the year ahead.

- We held Open Houses at both of our Centers in October to advertise programming for the year ahead and build coalition across units and departments. Both were well attended.

- In November The Women’s Center and the Office of Diversity and Inclusion held a reception for our campus community to mark the occasion of Sekile Nzinga being selected as a YWCA Woman of the Year. A representative of the YWCA spoke, and the event was also focused on celebrating and furthering that community relationship.

- Our student staffer, Sherlina Chauhan planned a *Rest & Relaxation* evening of crafts and snacks at the Women’s Center during finals week.

- In partnership with the Queer Pride Graduate Student Association, the Women’s Center hosted a screening of the premiere of the *LWord: Generation Q*.

- The Women’s Center hosted the graduate student specific event, *Creating and Sustaining a Feminist Writing Group*, in which members of a long-standing feminist writing collective met with students to discuss the challenges and methods of successful collaboration and support.

- We planned simultaneous online *Inkwell Writers Retreats* at both centers. This free online event didn’t go according to plan because of a mistake around the time-zone, and perhaps more time commitment (half day) than was possible for many who might have attended.

- In the fall we piloted a *Feminist Campus Tour* with a group from Hobart Women’s Residential College. This tour will be revised and utilized in the coming year.
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• Our Winter student staffers launched a Women's History Month Instagram Campaign in which they highlighted our Center's history over the course of the month.

• Both Women's Centers offer private lactation space. Access is coordinated by the HR Wellbeing office. The Evanston lactation room contains a small library of texts on parenting and social justice and lactating parents are able to borrow spare pump parts from our front office should they require.

C. Collaboration & Co-Sponsorships
Many of the programs listed above were collaborative and co-sponsored. The following events draw from the Women's Center in terms of financial support, committee work, shared marketing responsibilities, and even regular attendance by our staff. They are otherwise initiatives that originate in a separate unit. They include but are not limited to: MLK Dreamweek and MLK Dreamweek speaker, Tarana Burke; Our Associate Director’s role as a Fellow at Hobart Women’s Residential College; all College Feminist programming including a very successful virtual Sex Week for which we provided an above average amount of technical support and guidance; College Feminists’ February body positivity speaker; the Queer Pride Graduate Student Association Conference-Queertopia. In addition, QPGSA, MSA, and the Critical Prison Studies Reading Group received co-sponsorship funds from the Women’s Center.

We partnered with over 45 groups who used our space for their events and meetings in both our Chicago and Evanston centers:

Chicago
  o YourLife Wellness Program - Drop-In Meditation (staff and faculty)
  o Yoga – Assel Biyasheva and Petra Fey (community)
  o Pilates – Regina Cadenhead (community)
  o A Space For Us (staff support group)
  o ANUW Book club
  o GWAN (graduate students)

Evanston
  o Association of Northwestern University Women (staff)
  o ANUW Book club
  o Queer Pride Graduate Student Association (graduate students)
  o Graduate Women of Color Group
  o Black Affinity Group
  o Summer Academic Workshop (undergraduate students)
  o Social Justice Education - Sustained Dialogue (undergraduate students)
  o Girl Up (undergraduate student group)
  o Graduate Women Across Northwestern (graduate students)
  o CARE monthly drop in hours (students)
Masculinity, Allyship, Reflection, Solidarity (undergraduate student group)
- College Feminists (undergraduate student group)
- Sana Sana (a group for empowering Latinx-identifying undergraduate students) - sponsored by Multicultural Student Affairs
- Sexual Health and Assault Peer Educators (undergraduate student group)
- Society of Women Engineers (students)
- NU Alumni Association - Homecoming Committee (students)
- Taskforce on Student Wellbeing (students, faculty, and staff)
- Black Women’s Working Group (faculty, staff and student support)
- Hillel – Jewish Learning Fellowship (students)
- Office of the Provost - Selection Committee for Diversity Awards and Grants
- American Association for University Women Board (students, faculty, and staff)
- Graduate Society of Women Engineers Book Club (graduate students)
- Divine 9 Lunches (staff)
- Social Justice Education – Facilitator Gathering (staff and students)
- From Surviving to Thriving: Sexual Assault Survivor Support Group co-sponsored by CAPS & CARE (students)
- Black Girl Meetup event co-sponsored with Multicultural Student Affairs (staff)
- Organization of Women Faculty Steering Committee
- Compass (student mentorship program) sponsored by Student Enrichment Services
- National Pan-Hellenic Council Brown Bag (faculty and staff)
- Arch Society (student ambassadors of the NU Alumni Association)
- Take Back the Night Planning meetings (students)
- Office of Equity drop-in hours (students, faculty, and staff)
- Let’s Talk – drop-in hours for Counseling and Psychological Services (students)

Sekile co-chaired the Buffet Institute’s Gender Justice in Digital Life’s Working group and collaborated with Buffet, the Office of Equity, and CARE to host the group’s founding convening with partners from six different countries. The event was unfortunately cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. She also authored an exhibit label and an entry for a forthcoming Block Museum publication and exhibition. Sekile served on the Gender & Sexuality Studies Advisory Board, The Title IX coordinating committee, the Provost’s Council for Faculty Women, The Campus Coalition Against Sexual Violence and convened the Women’s Center’s Advisory Group.

Sarah served on the Campus Coalition Against Sexual Violence committee, the Dream Week planning committee, the Body Positivity working group through HPAW, the One Book One Northwestern Steering Committee, the Association of Northwestern University Women Advisory Board, a search committee for a Program Coordinator at the Office of Equity, and in starting in spring and summer on the Diversity Leaders Group.

Melisa served on the Dream Week planning committee and the Campus Coalition Against Sexual Violence committee.
Njoki served on the NU Cares Committee, The Black Women’s Working Group and the Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee. She was also a faculty fellow at the Women’s Residential College. Additionally, Njoki also served on the Northshore Women’s Organizations Group.

D. Training & Speaking Engagements

Women’s Center Staff have both received and provided meaningful training in AY 2019-2020 and have delivered several public or university addresses.

- Our staff attended and some presented at the National Women’s Studies Association Annual Conference and the Women’s Centers’ Summit in San Francisco in November.
- Melisa and Sarah received LGBTQIA+ Ally Training. Sekile became a trainer for this program and facilitated a Gender 101 training to Health Services.
- Sekile gave the opening remarks, Reproductive Justice 101” at Pritzker’s Reproductive Justice week, ran by law student organization If/When/How.
- Sarah spoke on the subject of gender equity in higher education at the Psychiatry Department faculty retreat.
- Sarah spoke on a post-performance panel for “Wonder Women” a musical performance by the Third Coast Baroque opera and baroque music company in Chicago and Evanston.
- Njoki facilitated a dialogue on connecting across our racial identity for the Psychiatry’s Department faculty retreat.
- Njoki attended many larger community workshops that examined oppression (gender, race, class etc. including climate change); and its impact on individuals and society. The workshops focused on how to heal from the hurts caused by oppression and how to transform society into a social justice one. Njoki funded these workshops with her own financial resources.
- Sekile Nzinga, was an invited as the keynote speaker at Northeastern Illinois University’s Black Women’s Leadership Conference
- Sarah gave a talk on the history of Feminism, “The ‘F’ word,” in partnership with the Women in Business Association for Kellog’s Gender Equity Week.

E. Transition to Remote Team

The Women’s Center has reimagined our work during the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition to the resources we compiled for the Mutual Aid Guide, we moved existing groups and scheduled events online and developed new operations, communications and programming to meet the university's new reality.
Community Drop-In hours on Zoom was created to simulate the “open doors” nature of our centers so that students, staff, and faculty could frequently stop by to find information and support. Similarly, we held weekly Office Hours by phone.

We provided the Feminist Solution Focused Coaching program both via online and by phone.

To address the loss of the A Space for Us programming and in response to the continued attacks on Black life, after the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade and countless others, Njoki worked with Alycia Raines in MSA to create Black Girl Meetup, a biweekly peer support group.

Lavender Lunch and New Parents combined campuses and moved online for spring.

A new support group, Asian and Pacific Islander Desi American (APIDA) Community Care was created to support staff, faculty and students targeted by increased racism and xenophobia due to COVID-19 was supposed to launch in person on 3/12 but we moved it online in the spring quarter.

As noted above, we partnered with Learning and Organization Development, HR Well Being, and the Office of Equity to offer the new biweekly online series: Caring for Ourselves and Others as We Navigate Change: A New Staff Dialogue Series. The topics are responsive to the realities of the pandemic and remote work has been consistently well attended and well-reviewed in post discussion surveys.

Several events for which we had worked and planned were cancelled due to the pandemic and switch to remote work. These include: Our annual spring Garden Party (though we did create a slide show and music playlist as a substitute); our Women’s history Month Symposium and community lunch with Center Directors; Sekile’s Women’s History Month Keynote Address at Northwestern, San Francisco; Sekile’s planned lecture for the “A Day at Northwestern” Alumni Relations event; the founding meeting, tours, and community events for the Global Gender Justice and Digital Life Working Group, planned in partnership with the Buffet Institute; and the Girl’s Summit—an annual day of workshops to build skills, esteem, and community for middle-school aged girls from Gale Academy in Rogers Park.

F. Grants and Awards

Women’s Center staff received awards related to their work at Northwestern and the Center received or is under consideration for a number of grants.

Sekile Nzinga was chosen as one of the 2019 YWomen: Women in Leadership by the Evanston North Shore YWCA.

Njoki Kamau was selected as the 2020 recipient of the Jean E. Shedd University Citizenship Award.

Sarah and Sekile received a faculty Daniel Linzer Diversity Grant to the develop the course, Feminism and Social Change for Spring of 2021.
The Women's Center received a *Your Life Wellness Grant* to support the Social Media’s Impact on Sexual Violence Survivors Workshop.

Northwestern has forwarded our grant proposal for a Feminist Leadership Institute for the *Dr. Scholl Foundation annual grant*. If awarded, the grant will permit us to establish an intergenerational retreat to build solidarity and acquire skills of movement building and feminist leadership through a series of off-site workshops and guest speakers.

The Women's Center will be a named partner on the *National Institute of Health Supplementary Grant* ‘Building Capacity in Low- and Middle-Income Country Institutions [...] to Develop Awareness, Training, Procedure, and Policy for Responding to Allegations of Sexual Harassment” in partnership with the Institute for Global Health and the University of Lagos in Nigeria. As a supplement to existing HIV research grants the NIH is awarding supplements to improve conditions for gender equity and capacity building to combat harassment and assault on campuses they engage with globally. This application is under review. If awarded, the funds would go toward policy making and capacity building efforts at the University of Lagos in anticipation of a new Center for Equity on their campus. The proposed budget includes 5% effort sharing cost for Sarah Brown’s salary (5% of her salary would come from the NIH, thus making more funds available for the Women's Center). It will also provide a potential opportunity to host our Nigerian colleagues and travel to Lagos to assist with training at their new center.

G. Challenges

Unsurprisingly, the greatest challenge to AY19-20 was the Covid-19 global health crisis. As noted in the section on structural impediments, however, as an openly feminist and community engaged unit on a college campus, we have experienced a disproportionate blow to our safety and security over the years. The move to remote work has compromised our sense of safety and security. It has also disrupted our usual methods of establishing community and disabled our usual strategies of convening during times of crisis, like the zoom attacks. These realities are challenges to our ability to function well in the era of remote work and call for greater institutional support. The pandemic also resulted in a loss of critical members of our staff, which halted projects, lowered staff morale, and most importantly, negatively impacted the staff member’s projected income. It is also the case that this academic year was a first year for 50% of our staff. For them, it was not long after they had onboarded that they needed to make a dramatic shift in their work. At the same time our Director’s new position as the Interim Associate Provost and Chief Diversity Officer ballooned beyond expectation while also maintaining directorship of our center. The social, political and institutional pressures of a spring of charged anti-black violence further elevated the visibility and scrutiny of her CDO position. Again, our staff has risen to the challenges placed before them. We look forward nonetheless to a period of greater public health safety, unit level stability, and renewed community in the next academic year.

Section III: Looking Ahead

A. Goals

*Increase visibility and engagement with faculty and students*

The Women's Center is a trusted resource for many students and faculty. Our reputation amongst University staff on both campuses is even stronger. Our new student orientation
program and graduate student support group, along with some other targeted programs sought to increase our visibility amongst the student body this past year with success. Once it becomes safe to do so, we would like to further encourage students to look to the Women’s Center as a place where they can congregate beyond their club meetings. We are particularly invested in creating space for students whose options for supportive spaces are limited, such as our queer, trans and non-binary students. Current faculty women are aware of our Center but less acclimatized to taking advantage of our on-site programming. Continuing our work with the Provost’s Council for Faculty Women and other provost office initiatives to support Women Faculty will provide natural opportunities for outreach and engagement. We will continue to co-sponsor with academic departments and invite faculty to participate in our programming as we did with Deb Teurkheimer for the pre-Tarana Burke visit and Heather Pinkett and Ange-Therese Akono for STEM Kids Saturday.

Implement GQTNB task force recommendations and foster an all gender inclusive space
In the year to come we will continue to explore our own programmatic opportunities and opportunities to support work that is affirming for people of all genders. We have a binary gender term as part of our center’s name and signage within the Women’s Center that needs to be updated to reflect the current expansive understandings of gender and we will continue to work to improve our use of gender inclusive language. In addition to continuing to learn within our staff, we will need to develop onboarding for future student staffers that more clearly expresses our shared trans inclusive values and objectives. We are limited in our capacity to signal a progressive approach to gender without the changing our Center’s name so we have formally proposed such a change.

Successfully Pilot the Feminist in Residence Program
The Feminist in Residence Fellowship Program has the potential to set the work of our Center apart as a site for engaged scholarship and to create vital and longstanding commitments between our work toward gender equity and the vibrant scholarly, activist, and artistic institutions across Chicago and Evanston.

Continue to Refine our Marketing and Communications Strategies
The full redesign of our website and of our newsletter has greatly improved our capacity to clearly and invitingly disseminate information. In the year to come we can build from these efforts by formalizing the method by which other units and groups submit content for the newsletter, running quarterly website updates, providing more original content through the use of our blog.

Implement a Safe Return to Campus and Minimize Harm to Our Staff
While basic standards for health and safety were not among the Center’s goals, we set out to have earlier in the annual year, it does not serve well to deny that the way we proceed in the months to come is a literal matter of life and death. The challenge to us is to pursue meaningful engagement without taking on undue risk to ourselves or to those we go home to.

Achieving these goals necessitates the pace of truly intentional programming and the collaboration of multiple units across campus. To that end, we have provided a thoughtful and public health centered Return to Campus Plan. We anticipate the need to remain flexible and responsive in the coming months.
B. Structural Impediments

Online Security
Cyber insecurity, like regular safety and security, is a major challenge for Women’s Centers across the country. Our particular center has been identified by NUPD and NUIT Security as a particular target of attacks. In addition to the aforementioned violent zoombombings, we have been subject to imposter email attacks, phishing scams, and even taking over of our cell phone numbers during this period of remote work. NUIT security has provided advanced anti-malware and anti-virus software for our laptops at our request. There has, however, been no solution forwarded for our increased vulnerability were we to enter into public-facing online meeting spaces again. Because our work engages the larger community, we regularly open our events to our partners in the non-profit sector, faculty and students from other Chicago-area universities and to our international partners. Our programs are frequently attended by Evanston public. The additional work of gatekeeping public facing events online is time-consuming and far from a guarantee of security and we look forward to receiving greater institutional support to continue our community engaged work.

Online Crisis Intervention
On a similar note, we learned this year that there exists little in the way of an automatic response to crises affecting staff and faculty when violence directed at our community takes place online. We have been in touch with the Office of Equity, the NUPD, the FBI, and NUIT Security. The Office of Equity expensed the trauma counselor we hired but the work of creating that response of support was something we took on ourselves. While several individuals in the aforementioned offices have done their best to offer support, a centralized system of rapid response is a desirable solution to an affected unit otherwise prompted to piece together support for themselves in the wake of a serious and criminal disruption to their work. As one of the faculty members who attended our symposium attested, if those events had happened in person, we would have been surrounded by police cars and on the evening news. We are not suggesting we require police involvement, but instead are advocating from restorative and reparative responses from the university when traumatic events occur, whether they are online or in person. As it was, there was not even an email security alert issued to the university after our attack or we would come to learn, after other similar zoombombing events that preceded ours which might have been preventative if shared publicly as we do with petty thefts on the Chicago campus. While these attacks are difficult to prevent, we strongly suggest that they should not be downgraded to the level of nuisance given the harm they cause to staff, faculty, and students. As online meeting platforms are likely part of all of our futures, we would like to see and partner with a counterpart to NUIT security that is empowered to create trauma-informed responses to cyber-crimes, particularly those involving portrayals of violence of any kind.

Staffing
The Women’s Center has two locations and requires staffing in both to provide adequate programming for our Chicago and Evanston campuses. It continues to be a challenge adequately and appropriately serve our population of students, faculty and staff on two campuses with a lean staff of 4 full time employees and a limited operating budget. In order to effectively serve the Chicago campus, the staffing must return its FTE staffing to at least a 5 staff person model that it has had in the past. With this model the Women’s Center could re-introduce a daily presence on the Chicago campus and could implement the above priorities in parallel fashion. With a 5th staff person, designated as a program manager, the Women’s Center would also have more resources to engage in workshops and training.
particularly to meet the ever-pressing needs of URM women of color, international women, and gender minority students and colleagues who require targeted support based on their identified and documented needs. At present members of our staff work both on day to day programming and strategic efforts and leadership within university wide initiatives. It leaves us spread incredibly thin and leaves our Chicago Center understaffed on some days. With creative solutions like our Feminist in Residence program, the shared time of all staffers across both campuses, and the implementation of more video streaming of Evanston events in Chicago, we are responding creatively to this challenge. Yet we continue to hope, however, for more greater institutional support to sustain, broaden and deepen our critical institutional work of advancing gender equity and inclusion at Northwestern

Budget
The Women’s Center has always functioned on a very lean budget. The newly implemented system of co-sponsorships by event or item is promising in regard to our capacity to effectively fund-raise. New restrictions around add-pay and COVID-19 cuts of our work-study students have been disruptive to our models of peer informed community building. Add pay serves for us to bring particular expertise and identities that can be important for the establishment of trust in a facilitation space. It is simply poor practice to have affinity-based groups, for example, facilitated by non-members of the group served. We are aiming to supplement future endeavors through grant funding and will continue to find ways to maximize the funds we have to offer a robust selection of support services, intellectual engagement, and original programming but hope for a budget, both personnel and programming, that is aligned proportionally in order to operate our two centers.