

Section III: Other COWAC Activities

A. Staff Career and Professional Development

COWAC's staff subcommittee continued to advocate for enhanced career and professional development opportunities for employees. As a result of COWAC's year-long collaboration with NUSAC, ANUW, and HR's training and development department, progress was made towards providing NU staff with the tools needed to create more satisfying careers. First, two brown bag seminars on career planning were held in the spring. Over 200 staff members attended these brown-bags, which were sponsored by NUSAC. One, called "Taking Charge of Your Career," was led by Lonnie Dunlap, Director of NU University Career Services. The second brown-bag, "Navigating the NU Job Market," was led by HR staff. The enthusiastic response to these two well-received sessions confirms staff's interest in career planning. As a follow-up, Training and Development staff created a link on its website that contains the materials distributed at the workshops.

Another result of this past year's multi-group collaboration was the conception and design of a four-part workshop series called "Managing Your Career" that will be offered by HR's training and development department, starting in CY 2005. COWAC feels that this career planning series will demonstrate Northwestern's commitment to developing and retaining its staff resources, and will serve to promote the concept of career development as part of our institutional culture.

Finally, COWAC is tracking Human Resources' efforts to design a new staff performance management system, which will be piloted in 2005. This system should clarify the manager's role in developing staff and train them to effectively evaluate staff performance. Concepts such as providing clear performance objectives and creating opportunities for both formal and informal feedback on performance will be included.

COWAC applauds HR's Training and Development and Consulting and Staffing Departments in their ongoing efforts to develop career planning resources for staff and train managers on staff development and performance evaluation. These initiatives have the potential to improve significantly the working environment for everyone by equipping managers with the skills necessary to identify staff training needs; increasing communication between managers and their staff concerning performance; and equipping

staff with the tools they need to chart their own careers at NU. COWAC will continue to monitor all of these initiatives and participate as appropriate in their implementation and evaluation.

B. Civility Policy

A policy on Civility in the Workplace has been adopted and will be promulgated to staff and faculty in 2005. COWAC has been engaged in this issue for several years and feels that the policy will help solidify the importance of both staff and faculty's roles in furthering the University's goals. COWAC encourages wide publicity of the new civility policy.

C. Oversight of University Childcare Initiatives

In 2002, COWAC was charged with monitoring the progress of the University's childcare initiatives that resulted from the Child Care Committee's report to the Provost. The following is COWAC's assessment of progress made thus far in meeting the Committee's seven original recommendations. The Childcare Committee's complete report can be viewed at <http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/committees/childcare/index.html>.

"1. Establishment of childcare facilities"

Evanston campus initiatives

In an effort to better meet the childcare needs of the University community in Evanston, in the fall of 2002, the University entered into a partnership with the McGaw YMCA in Evanston in connection with its preexisting child care center. Under the agreement, Northwestern has ongoing involvement in management of the center through positions on the McGaw Board, McGaw childcare parent committee, and on a committee charged with coordinating the University resources that are available to the center; and has pledged a limited amount of financial support through the 5-year agreement. The partnership arrangements include a priority registration period through April for NU-

affiliated parents for any available slots in the Center. In addition, NU has the option to purchase spaces at market rates.

When the partnership was undertaken, the NU-affiliated enrollment at the McGaw facility was 20; it has since risen in the spring of 2004 to 83 of the now 317 total enrollments. This represents 35% of the children enrolled in the full day preschool, 20% of those in the part-day preschool, and 16% of those enrolled in the after school program. Of those enrolled, 43% are children of staff; 27% of faculty and 29% of students.

The University has allocated \$65,000 (up by 30% from the 2002-03 allocation) toward tuition support for those attending the McGaw facility, capping the award at \$5,000 per child. The University and its personnel have funded and otherwise supported an enhanced fine arts program for the center, including the hiring of a part-time arts teacher and coordinator, a part-time music teacher for the preschool, and an arts festival featuring NU performers, and several other special events.

COWAC is pleased to note that not only has the McGaw program continued to pursue its own quality assurance program (it conducts various parent satisfaction surveys, is participating in the YMCA's own childcare certification process, and is in the midst of the self-evaluation required in the NAEYC accreditation process), but also that the University has supported the efforts of NU's Office of Childcare, Family Services and Work Life to elicit information regarding the program directly from NU parents. Various changes in the administration of the McGaw center, including the addition of an executive-level child care services director and infant/toddler and a preschool coordinator also reflect the efforts of the center to provide superior care.

Chicago campus initiatives

The University has finalized an agreement with KinderCare@Work to open a facility with a capacity of 112 near the Chicago campus early in 2005. Under the agreement, KinderCare will incur all of the acquisition and build-out costs of establishing the center, which will provide priority enrollment to NU affiliates. NU has priority over the community for all 112 spaces in the center. NU units on the Chicago campus have agreed to underwrite the cost for tuition for approximately half the center's capacity and will only incur fees should these spaces remain unfilled by NU families. It is anticipated

that the bulk of the spaces at this facility will be for care of those under two, a well-identified need in the community. As of October 11, 2004 (less than a month after registration began), the center registered about 60 NU-affiliated families for either a January start date or attendance later in 2005. At this date only 11 of the 52 financially guaranteed spaces remain unfilled for a January opening day of the center.

“2. Securing donor support for childcare funding”

No significant developments in securing donor support for childcare have been brought to the attention of COWAC.

“3. Enhancing other childcare options in Evanston”

Because center care is not a desirable option for all parents and all circumstances, the original Childcare Committee report urged the University to support the enhancement of other options as well.

Consistent with this goal, Northwestern entered into a partnership with the Childcare Network of Evanston (CNE) in which CNE offers training to childcare providers who provide back-up care (typically, short-term, intermittent care) either in their own homes or that of the clients. Under this program, forty caregivers have been trained and made available for back-up and flexible care. In addition, ten home-care providers have completed the training program; five of these providers have been fully licensed, and an additional three are in the licensing process.

The Childcare Network of Evanston also is involved in resource and referral services for the NU community. In 2002-2003, it assisted 118 families (46 staff, 30 faculty, and 26 student) in pursuing various childcare options (41 requesting flexible care, 23 center care, and 17 home care).

“4. Enhancing other childcare options in Chicago”

The University has continued its relationship with the Day Care Action Council of Chicago, now known as Action for Children, a referral service that provides information to faculty, staff and students on childcare providers in the City of Chicago and collar counties. (Thus, this service is used by both Chicago-based and Evanston-based faculty

and staff.) It handles about 100 requests per year, mostly by those seeking care for children under two.

“5. Enhancement of Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account and matching programs”

Participation in the dependent care flexible spending account (FSA) program, which can be used for eligible child care expenses, and in the dependent care FSA matching program, has continued to increase over the past year, reflecting both the increase in match rates offered by the University and stronger promotion of the programs. As of January 2004, 136 employees applied and qualified for matching funds, totaling \$290,877; in 2003, 126 employees qualified for matching funds, totaling \$257,121, while in 2002, before the program enhancements took effect, only 102 participants claimed matching funds of \$138,000. COWAC is pleased to note that when applications for funds resulted in qualified applications needing funding at a higher level than originally budgeted, the University chose to increase the amount available rather than leave some portion of the requests unfunded.

For the first time since the inception of the dependent care FSA matching program, participation has used up the allotted budget. It is uncertain whether, should participation continue to increase without additional budgeted allotted, participation will drop as a result of uncertainty about the degree to which the University match will in fact be available at the time the employee commits to participate.

“6. Evaluation of sick childcare program”

The sick childcare program remains almost unused, and may become even less valued if the training of flexible childcare providers makes in-home care of sick children easier to arrange.

It is unclear whether this is the result of the lack of awareness, or lack of interest even by those who are aware. Such a program is only of use if it can be availed of on relatively short notice. The existing arrangements should be re-examined to determine this program's potential usefulness.

“7. Enhancement of Office of Work Life, Child and Family Resources”

COWAC is pleased to report that the energy and dedication of Katie Krauch, director of the reconstituted (and recently renamed) Office of Childcare, Family Resources and Work Life continues unabated. She has played a major role in the successful implementation of many of the University’s initiatives.

Krauch should continue to meet at least annually with COWAC to provide updates on the various childcare initiatives, so that COWAC may fulfill its charge of monitoring the University’s progress toward the goals laid out in the report of the Childcare Committee.

COWAC’s Continued Role in the Monitoring of the University’s Childcare Needs

The Childcare Committee envisioned a role for COWAC not only in monitoring the early progress of the specific initiatives recommended to and undertaken by the University, but also with monitoring the degree to which these initiatives will continue to meet over the longer term the childcare needs of the University community as identified in the Committee Report. In its Report for 2002-03, COWAC identified the following as the more salient questions to be answered as part of this oversight function:

- A. Is the University community appropriately aware of the University’s childcare initiatives?
- B. Do the currently available childcare resources meet the expectations of those using them?
- C. Are there any aspects of the childcare needs of the University community that were identified by the Childcare Committee that are not adequately met by the currently implemented initiatives?

The survey administered to all staff and faculty this year addressed some of these questions. Please see Section IIC of this report for a summary of responses.

COWAC would like to note that Katie Krauch has been of enormous assistance in providing the committee with the information appropriate to this oversight function, as outlined in the 2003-04 report. There seems little need to deviate from the practices that

have evolved over the last two years. COWAC urges the University to continue such practices, especially given the need to continually monitor whether the implemented and contemplated approaches appropriately serve the community.