

Media Relations:Northwestern Observer

Committee on Women in the Academic Community 1995-96 Annual Report

Committee Charge

In April of 1995, President Henry S. Bienen established the Committee on Women in the Academic Community (COWAC). The committee includes women and men drawn from the ranks of tenured and tenure-eligible faculty, lecturers, exempt and non-exempt staff, and librarians. It represents both the Chicago and the Evanston campuses.

The committee was convened to help implement the ambitious agenda laid out by the Task Force on Women in the Academic Workplace and the follow-up response from the university to ensure that NU is a place where all employees can contribute and develop. Its specific charge is the following:

- * reviewing the university's goal of enhancing the role of women in the workplace and helping to ensure that that goal will be achieved
- * assisting in the identification of available skills and resources within the committee, the university, and the general academic community to be drawn upon to aid the process of recruiting and developing women staff and faculty
- * recommending changes in personnel procedures as areas needing improvement are identified
- * ensuring effective lines of communication with women staff and faculty to gain their counsel and assistance in creating an environment that is supportive of all employees, especially women
- * providing an annual report to the university community which will be published in the Northwestern Observer.

Committee Membership

The committee was initially chaired by Neena B. Schwartz, William Deering Professor of Biological Sciences. At her request, a co-chair was added: Hilary M. Ward, Associate Dean of University College. When Professor Schwartz's appointment as Acting Dean of CAS necessitated her resignation as chair, she was replaced by Katherine T. Faber, Professor of Materials Science and Engineering and Associate Dean of McCormick School of Engineering and Applied Science.

Other committee members were appointed for one, two, and three year terms. In 1995-1996, committee members included the following: Wilma J. Baker-Hill, Assistant to the Vice Dean of the Medical School; Stephen M. Burke, Painter Foreman, Physical Plant; Andreen A. Neukranz-Butler, Director, Equal Employment Opportunity, Affirmative Action and Disability Services; Kathleen R. Daniels, Department Assistant, Department of English; Jerome B. Cohen, Dean of McCormick School of Engineering and Applied Science; Susan V. Herbst, Associate Professor of Communication Studies; Penny L. Hirsch, Charles Deering McCormick Distinguished Lecturer, CAS Writing Program; Laurel L. Minott, Assistant University Librarian; Sarah E. Neely, Assistant Professor of Neurology; Benjamin I. Page, Gordon Scott Fulcher Professor of Decision Making, Political Science; Renee A. Redd-Barnes, Director, Women's Center; Debra Whiteside, Department Assistant, Dorms and Commons. Robert Buckman, Physical Plant, replaced Stephen Burke who resigned from the committee. Ex officio members of the committee include Guy Miller, Associate Vice President, Human Resources; Eugene Y. Lowe, Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs; and Lawrence Dumas, Provost. Mary Bucholtz provides staff support.

Summary: 1995-96 Major Accomplishments for/by Women

COWAC Accomplishments

Sexual Harassment

* A sexual harassment workshop for deans, associate deans, and assistant deans was led by Renee Redd-Barnes, Director of the Women's Center, and Kathy Reese, Director of Counseling & Psychological Services (February 23, 1996). This meeting became a springboard for COWAC to begin working with the administration to address problems in the sexual harassment complaint system, thus paving the way for substantial revision of the system.

* Renee Redd-Barnes has been asked to submit a budget for developing a Women's Center for the Chicago campus.

Exit Interviews

* Twelve exit interviews from departing tenure-track and tenured faculty in 1995-96 were conducted in consultation with the Survey Lab. A database is being built to enable us to determine whether individuals are leaving the university for reasons related to gender or race.

Childcare

* Flexible Benefit Reimbursement Account Matching Fund benefits were

extended to those employees whose household incomes were less than \$20,000.

General

* A COWAC homepage was established on the world wide web (<http://nuinfo.nwu.edu/cowac>).

Other accomplishments of/for NU Women

* Promotions/appointments of senior women in the university:
Neena Schwartz, Acting Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences,
Lydia Villa-Komaroff, Associate Vice President of Research Administration

* Expansion of the search committee for the CAS dean to ensure gender equity

Working History

The committee first met in May of 1996. The group began by prioritizing the global recommendations made by the Task Force on Women in the Academic Workplace. From this prioritized list came an agenda for COWAC's first year. Since many of the prioritized items were related, the committee formed subcommittees to conduct most of the work (see the subcommittee for a complete list of committee members):

Sexual Harassment

Ben Page & Renee Redd-Barnes, co-chairs

Child Care

Stephen Burke, chair

Exit Interviews

Susan Herbst, chair

Faculty Promotion/Hiring

Jerry Cohen, chair

Staff Promotion/Hiring

Wilma Baker-Hill, chair

We also appointed COWAC members as liaisons to related campus organizations since we believe that two-way communication with the

larger NU community is very important:

Campus Group COWAC Liaisons

Ass'n. of NU Women (ANUW)

Hilary Ward

CAS Dept. Assistants Org.

Kathy Daniels

Gay & Lesbian University Union

Laurel Minott

Medical Women Faculty Org.

Sally Neely

NU Black Wimmin in Action

Renee Redd-Barnes

NU Staff Advisory Council

Debra Whiteside

Org. of Women Faculty

Penny Hirsch

Women Physicians at NMH

Wilma Baker-Hill

Liaisons were asked to keep their appointed group apprised of COWAC's efforts and to bring the group's concerns to COWAC.

To further facilitate communication, an e-mail address was created (cowac@nwu.edu) and is monitored by Kathy Daniels. In addition, Kathy created a homepage for COWAC. It may be found at <http://nuinfo.nwu.edu/cowac>. The homepage describes the mission and work of the committee, lists committee members with addresses and phone numbers, and points to related women's groups on campus.

The committee of the whole met eight times between May of 1995 and July of 1996 to discuss the work of the subcommittees and the liaisons and overarching issues. Outcomes and recommendations are presented under each subcommittee heading below.

President Bienen attended the October 24, 1995, COWAC meeting to affirm his support of our efforts. In the January 8, 1996, issue of the Observer, he reiterated his "expectation that members of the Northwestern community will continue to be cognizant of, and engaged in addressing the issues and questions raised last year by the Task Force."

Recommendations and Plans for 1996-97

COWAC recommends the following action items to the university administration and seeks the endorsement of the university as the Committee pursues its plans to accomplish these goals:

Sexual Harassment

1. Methods of reporting informal and formal complaints of sexual harassment should be reviewed and the university should consider publishing these methods more widely. The resolution of complaints should be tracked so that the statistics are not just the number of complaints received, but the number of complaints supported.
2. The University Sexual Harassment procedures should be revised, taking into account systems such as models at Princeton, MIT, etc., which offer multiple points of entry for formal and informal complaints and define these points/positions very clearly. Further consideration should be given to the appointment of a university ombudsperson and to the formulation of policies and procedures dealing with workplace harassment and mistreatment.
3. The Committee endorses Associate Provost Lowe's effort to draft revisions in close consultation with an expert committee that includes the university Affirmative Action officer, the director of the Women's Center, the director of CAPS, and a law professor with expertise concerning sexual harassment. The draft proposal, completed by the end of this summer, should be discussed with COWAC and with people broadly representative of the university community.
4. When new procedures are in place, a system should be devised for thoroughly training those with responsibility to handle complaints. In addition, voluntary educational sessions should be designed for administrators, faculty and staff, with top administrators setting the example by early participation.
5. COWAC should maintain a sexual harassment subcommittee to monitor and make suggestions concerning these and other aspects of the issues.

Hiring and Promotion of Staff

6. The University's mission statement should be modified to include staff. This could be as simple as a sentence that says, "Staff provides the human infrastructure for pursuing the University's mission." We anticipate that such a change would need to be initiated by President Bienen and may require approval from the Board of Trustees.
7. Once that is accomplished, Provost Dumas should be asked to raise the topic for discussion at the Dean's Council and encourage the deans to modify the mission statements of the individual schools.
8. The final results of pilot career development program now in progress at University Library should be reported to the university at large. The program should be evaluated for implementation in other schools/units.
9. Schools should consider adopting the CAS mentoring model or a modified version of such a model.

Hiring and Promotion of Faculty

10. All schools should be encouraged to adopt the following policy for hiring (which has proved very effective at the McCormick School): "For all searches, it is expected that the department bring to campus for an interview at least two candidates who are women and/or minorities. The school would pay for the additional cost of hotel and airfare, but not meals. Departures from this policy must be justified."
11. If a spouse of a junior faculty candidate is also an academic, the university should explore appointments for the spouse in other schools, if necessary, as part of start-up package. A pool of funds should be set up in order to facilitate short term appointments of this type.

Child Care

12. The university should explore alternative uses for funds currently not used for Flexible Benefit Matching Funds. This could include sick-child care benefits and family care. The present \$60,000 cap in annual income should be raised so that more families could be eligible for Flexible Benefit Matching Funds.
13. The university should continue to evaluate the feasibility of on-campus child care facilities, particularly on the Chicago Campus.
14. Our goal should be to make Northwestern a leader, not a follower,

in family care benefits.

Exit Interviews

15. Exit interviews should be conducted for all faculty, including lecturers, who leave of their own volition. This should be part of the formal exit process, and its funding should be built into the institutional budget.

16. Human Resources should look into how to conduct staff exit interview more efficiently and successfully.

General

17. COWAC should develop a system for working closely with the administration to achieve these goals and for monitoring yearly progress on each recommendation.

Subcommittee Reports

Sexual Harassment

Committee members: Andy Neukranz-Butler, Penny Hirsch, Sally Neely, Ben Page (co-chair), Renee Redd-Barnes (co-chair), and Debra Whiteside.

The subcommittee reviewed developments since the Task Force report and investigated the present extent of the sexual harassment problem. It found that the university has made substantial progress both before and after the Task Force Report, which has included appointing a full-time affirmative action officer; funding the Women Center's counseling and advocacy; writing a sexual harassment policy which is disseminated to staff every two years and publicized every year in university publications; creating a separate student judicial board to adjudicate cases of sexual harassment and sexual assault; developing a required 1-1/2 hour seminar on sexual harassment and sexual assault for entering freshmen; and providing some training for teaching assistants, faculty, and students (though training sessions have apparently declined in frequency).

There were two significant concerns. The first is the continuing reluctance of many sexual harassment victims—especially graduate students—to come forth. The second is a continuing lack of awareness of, or sensitivity to, this problem among some members of faculty and staff.

Motivated by these concerns, the subcommittee devoted much of its

efforts to issues concerning education and training and revision of the university's policies and procedures. The subcommittee investigated education and training programs at other institutions and carried out a four-hour pilot program of discussion and training on sexual harassment for a number of NU deans and associate deans. It quickly became apparent that, even among this self-selected, relatively well-informed and sympathetic group, there was considerable confusion about many aspects of our sexual harassment policies and procedures.

This experience led the subcommittee to shift its attention to the need to revise and clarify university policies and procedures. Indeed, Associate Provost Eugene Lowe has already begun to canvass the policies and procedures of other institutions and is preparing to draft proposed changes, in consultations with the university's Affirmative Action officer, the director of the Women's Center, the director of CAPS, an NU Law School expert on the law of sexual harassment, and others.

One promising model distinguishes between "Confidential Counselors," to whom victims may go for entirely confidential consultation and "Designated Individuals," who receive complaints of sexual harassment within a rubric of official university reaction. Designated individuals, however, do not deal only with formal complaints; they are encouraged to resolve matters by informal means when complainants wish to do so.

Procedures developed for dealing with sexual harassment may well have implications for the treatment of harassment based on age, religion, race or other factors. The subcommittee recommends that NU consider formulating a general harassment policy dealing with all unreasonable workplace behaviors, and consider appointing a senior, widely-respected faculty member to serve part-time as an ombudsperson.

Staff Promotion/Hiring

Committee members: Wilma Baker-Hill (chair), Kathy Daniels, Sally Neely, Andy Neukranz-Butler, and Hilary Ward.

This subcommittee focused its first year on issues of internal promotions and staff development. We met with representatives of the Human Resources and of CAS to discuss staff development and mentoring.

The employment division of Human Resources has created a Career Development Program to help employees plan appropriate career paths within the University. The workshop series includes a session which provides supervisors with the tools necessary to assist staff in their career planning. This program was piloted in the University Library.

Preliminary feedback is promising. We encourage the further refinement of the program and its promulgation to other units.

CAS has an active mentoring program that pairs new employees with more senior staff and with peers. One mentor is a veteran employee who can serve as an institutional memory and the other is new enough to remember what a new hire first needs to learn. We encourage the other units within the University to consider how mentoring can be encouraged.

The subcommittee also reviewed the mission statements of NU and the constituent schools to see what light they shed upon the role of staff. In most cases the mission statements moved from a description of the school's goals to some detail about how those goals were to be achieved. In only three cases (University College, the Medical School, and CAS) were staff mentioned as contributing to the achievement of the school's mission. When you do not name something, it remains invisible. The subcommittee urges that the mission statements of NU and the constituent schools be reviewed and amended to acknowledge the role and value of staff in furthering the University's mission.

Faculty Hiring/Promotion

Committee members: Jerome Cohen (chair), Kathy Daniels, Penny Hirsch, and Neena Schwartz.

The subcommittee reviewed programs in place that have been effective in the McCormick School of Engineering for all faculty searches. The first deals with faculty searches. For each junior search in the McCormick School, it is required that the department bring to campus for an interview at least two candidates who are women or minorities. The school pays for the additional cost of hotel and airfare, but not meals. The anticipated cost is approximately \$1,000 per search.

A recognized challenge in the hiring of women is spouse placement. One strategy that has been attempted in the McCormick School is the use of school funds to provide a one-quarter lectureship or visiting assistant professorship for the spouse within Northwestern (and sometimes outside the McCormick School). The approximate cost per position is of the order of \$20,000. There is no commitment here of a permanent position; such a decision is left to the hiring unit in which the spouse is employed. Because these programs could be a drain on a school's budget, suggestions of a University-wide fund as administered through the provost's office would be appropriate.

Because of the success of these programs in McCormick, the subcommittee

recommended that they be implemented University-wide.

Child Care

Committee members: Steve Burke (chair), Katherine Faber, and Guy Miller.

The subcommittee's first task was to review the data collected for the Task Force concerning Child Care. Response to a mail survey to 100% of the NU community and a phone survey to a smaller number of people showed that the needs of the Northwestern community are varied in terms of location, type, and price of child care desired. Most clearly lacking for child care options are those who desire near-campus care for those on the Chicago campus.

A second issue deals with Flexible Benefit Reimbursement Account program and its matching component for those employees with household incomes less than \$60,000 per year and originally greater than \$20,000 per year. Starting January 1, 1995, FBRA Matching Fund benefits were extended to those employees whose household incomes were less than \$20,000. These households were originally thought to be eligible for federal benefits, but such benefits are administratively difficult to obtain. In 1994-95, 200 families took part in the FBRA program; 74 in the matching fund option. The relatively low participation in this program can be attributed to any number of reasons: a child care provider who does not have a tax identification number, paper work and reporting requirements associated with the program, inaccessibility of funds for up to month (contributions must be taken from pay in advance of spending). The subcommittee discussed methods for publicizing the program better.

Currently there is in excess of \$160,000 in the FBRA Matching Fund Account. The committee has discussed options for better use of those funds. Suggestions include sick-child care benefits and family care benefits. Guy Miller presented to the full committee some sick child care benefit programs offered at other universities for consideration. These matters will be pursued further in the coming year.

Exit Interviews

Committee members: Susan Herbst (chair) and Laurel Minott

In summer of 1995, the first set of exit interviews were conducted by the NU Survey Lab. Eighteen of 23 (78%) exiting faculty participated. The bulk of the respondents said in response to the survey that they were leaving for new sorts of challenges. Most were "very" or "somewhat

satisfied" with the collegiality of the NU faculty (67%) and with the collegiality in their departments (72%). Fewer were satisfied with the non-salary support from the school (50%) or from the department (39%). Twenty-seven percent expressed dissatisfaction with salary. Most found NU an enabling environment for meeting scholarly (72%) and teaching (89%) responsibilities.

The exit interview program was given funding to continue the survey for a second year. One shortfall of the original survey was the exclusion of lecturers. After discussion from the full committee, it was decided to include lecturers in subsequent surveys.

Another issue brought to the full committee was exit interviews for staff. Currently, 10% of exiting staff are given an exit interview. Guy Miller discussed some of the difficulties in getting full participation in staff exit interviews. This topic will receive greater attention in 1996-97.

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