

President's comments on the 1995-96 COWAC Report

January 24, 1997

Dr. Katherine T. Faber MEAS Materials Science and Engineering 3033 Materials & Life Science Building Evanston Campus 3108

Ms. Hilary Ward University College Wieboldt Hall Chicago Campus B307

Dear Katherine and Hilary:

I was very pleased to receive your 1995-96 Annual Report for the Committee on Women in the Academic Community. I would like to meet with the Committee to discuss both accomplishments of the past year as well as our mutual objectives for the future. I have attached a statement of our reactions to the recommendations.

It is our intention to publish your report and my response in an upcoming issue of the Observer. I very much appreciate the time you and the other members of the committee and subcommittees have devoted to these issues and hope that we can work together to see significant improvements at Northwestern.

Sincerely,

Henry S. Bienen President

President's comments on the 1995-96 COWAC Report

The report is a positive contribution to the agenda of the University to improve the position of women in the academic community at Northwestern. We are largely supportive of the recommendations you have forwarded and I want to provide a more detailed response to your report.

In addition to the senior appointments you noted in your report, I would also like to recognize the following new appointments of women as department chair, including Professor Faber's pending appointment in Materials Sciences, Betsy Erkkila in English, Michal Ginsburg in French and Italian, Beth Levin in Linguistics, and Deborah Lucas in Finance. The importance of such senior leadership roles was underscored in the report of the Task Force on Women and we should continue to monitor chair appointments.

Now with specific reference to the recommendations and plans enumerated by COWAC:

Sexual Harassment

1.-3. We have received a draft of proposed revisions of the University sexual harassment guidelines. We will be communicating directly with the subcommittee and

the full committee with a response after completing our review.

4.-5. We agree.

Hiring and Promotion of Staff

6.-7. We understand the symbolic interest in this and reviewed the University's mission statement in this context. However the focus of the statement did not lend itself to ready incorporation of the proposed language since it dealt with goals rather than implementing strategies. A similar circumstance may apply at the school level and thus we leave it to school discretion whether such language is incorporated. We would rather focus on more concrete steps to improve conditions for staff.

8. This has been a good program. The staff person who initiated it has now left the University. Human Resources has been alerted to your recommendation and asked to consider if there are ways this program can be sustained and expanded.

9. This approach will be incorporated into supervisor training, though we are aware of other units that already take this approach. It is a good one. We will also look for opportunities to publicize effective strategies for staff development.

Hiring and Promotion of Faculty

10. The Provost's Office has been very proactive in working with the Schools to ensure that aggressive efforts are made to recruit women and minorities. It is important that schools continue to act aggressively to identify candidates from underrepresented groups through such procedures. At this point, I do not believe it prudent to be prescriptive to this extent about how searches should be managed.

11. Spousal employment is handled on a case-by-case basis, assisting with opportunities both on and off campus. We utilize our trustees and other contacts in this process.

Child Care

12. We have received a recommendation from the COWAC subcommittee on child care for a sick child care program. The proposal is now being evaluated and will be reviewed by the Budget Review Group. (*The proposal for sick child care was evaluated and, because of its use of undergraduate students as care givers, was felt to be impractical. Alternatives are now being explored with COWAC.*)

13. We have evaluated this option in the past and will continue to do so. Having said that, we feel that a single on-campus facility has the disadvantage of serving only those who work on the campus where the facility is located, while we have people working on both campuses. It also would serve only those who chose to

procure child care services at their work locations, while many prefer to arrange child care near their residences. For these reasons, the portable benefit that we now offer serves the members of our community having diverse needs and resources.

14. Northwestern is already acknowledged as a leader in family concerns. We will continue to be vigilant in seeing to the family needs of our faculty and staff. If you have not seen it, you should take a look at the article on "Family Friendly" policies at academic institutions in the Chronicle of Higher Education, October 11, 1996. The article reports that Northwestern policies place it among the top 29 of 375 four-year institutions that responded to a survey conducted by the Families and Work Institute and the College and University Personnel Association Foundation. In addition to the top 29, another 65 institutions are called "leadership campuses" in the survey's report. Institutional policies and practices were surveyed in areas of institutional support for personal and family concerns, flexible work arrangements, time off for dependent care, assistance for child and elder care, benefits and financial assistance, and supportive institutional culture.

Exit Interviews

15. Susan Herbst has been conducting interviews of departing faculty. We will review the results of this work to determine both faculty receptivity and usefulness of the information collected.

16. The majority of the members of our staff who leave the University are gone before Human Resources is informed of their departure. The HR department talks with about 10 percent of those who leave. A higher staffing level in HR would be needed if we were to undertake more extensive exit interviewing and if we were aware of departures while the employee was still available. Some changes in procedure would be needed and we will have to evaluate the information return on the investment in a higher staffing level.

General

17. We agree and appreciate the work accomplished to date.

(The text in italics was added to Bienen's comments after the January 24, 1997 letter.)

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