

N O R T H W E S T E R N

U N I V E R S I T Y

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

May 12, 1999

Hilary Ward Schnadt, COWAC Co-Chair
and COWAC members
Associate Dean
University College Administration
608 Wieboldt Hall
Chicago Campus B307

RE: Response to 1997-1998 Annual Report

Dear Hilary:

I thank you for the 1997-1998 Annual Report of the Committee on Women in the Academic Community.

The committee continues to provide an important forum for monitoring University performance in areas of gender equity for faculty and staff and to provide constructive assistance in the continuing development of University policies and practices that advance our shared objectives in gender equity. I very much value this role and think we should work together to deepen this relationship to address the issues that concern us. As I will note below in my response to your progress report, there are areas where we need to intensify our assessment of progress and I look forward to working with you in doing this. These are issues that we both care deeply about and which addressed effectively can help raise awareness and commitment on campus.

As your report shows, Northwestern has benefited greatly as a community from the work of the Task Force Concerning Women in the Academic Workplace and the implementation efforts that have followed since it was issued in 1994. As I read the recent report from MIT on the status of women faculty there in the sciences, I reflected on the advantages we have accrued from our earlier address of these issues. In contrast to their findings on salary differences, our study found no such disparities. At the same time, the attention received by the MIT study reinforces the need for our own ongoing efforts to monitor our environment and develop appropriate agendas to further improve the climate for women at Northwestern.

I will now address the specifics of your report, commenting first on the issues identified in the introduction, and then sharing my reactions to the more detailed commentary on the 1994 Task Force Report.

We appreciate very much the work that COWAC has done promoting revision of the Sexual Harassment protocols of the University. As you know, the Provost and I have – following the recommendations of the General Faculty Committee (GFC) and the Northwestern University Staff Advisory Committee (NUSAC) – accepted a recommendation that we hire a University Sexual Harassment Prevention Officer.

As I also believe you know, we have not yet succeeded in filling the position. We took seriously the suggestion that this position be filled in approximately a half-time basis by someone in the senior faculty or administration. We are now expanding the candidate pool, because we have not been able to identify a suitable candidate prepared to undertake this responsibility at this time.

We will continue to seek your advice as this search progresses. COWAC has made an invaluable contribution to the University and we expect that we will implement the program for the 1999-2000 academic year.

We are pleased that progress has been made on a “sick” daycare program for staff children and hope that our working parents have found this helpful.

We agree with COWAC that lecturers play an indispensable role in the educational programs at the University and your decision to provide for their representation is very helpful.

We commend you for your initiative in reaching out to other constituencies at the University to address women’s issues.

The Task Force Report. A Review

In the “Specific Recommendations,” you provide a helpful assessment about thirty-one areas highlighted in the 1994 Task Force Report, observing that progress has been made on many fronts, and that there are some areas where less has happened. My review of these issues gives me a sense of encouragement, as well as a sense of opportunity. COWAC is the only body in the University constituted to address concerns that affect women faculty, exempt and non-exempt staff.

I strongly support the efforts being undertaken to update the data profile underlying the 1994 Report. I would also hope that this updating would provide an opportunity for us to “check” ourselves in relation to our own goals and, where feasible, to benchmark our efforts in relation to other comparable universities. We look forward to receiving those updates. In your detailed report it was clear that information had not been analyzed that would enable us to assess career development at Northwestern as well as make selected salary comparisons (#11, 12, and 20). We should address these needs. I hope that we can use this time both to reflect on what has transpired at Northwestern and to ask ourselves how we can continue to position the University to do the most effective job possible, supporting the development and aspirations of our faculty and staff. As the recent MIT study on the status of women faculty suggests, this is a formidable task.

As you observe, there is progress on a number of fronts and work that needs to be done. We were heartened by the progress you noted in such a large number of the recommendations from the 1994 Task Force. We agreed with most of your assessments and were pleased that in 21 of the 31 recommendations progress was noted. For 3 of the 31 (# 11, 12 and 20) additional information is needed so there are no conclusive findings for these in our judgment.

For 4 of the 31 (#10,18,27 and 29), the administration had indicated that the original recommendations were not accepted as framed and this still holds. You noted three areas of insufficient progress: supervisor training (#8), advising of declined internal applicants (#15) and exit interviews for departing staff (#28). We agree that these represent areas where we need to work with COWAC and the appropriate administrative offices to determine an effective way of addressing these concerns. I appreciate very much the constructive tone of the report, as well as your continuing commitment to help us make the university a better place to work and to learn.

Thank you again for this very helpful report and let me reiterate our commitment to these shared goals and our enthusiasm for working with you to improving the environment for women at Northwestern.

Sincerely,



Henry S. Bienen
President