UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON WOMEN

2000-2001
YEAR END REPORT
NEW FEMALE STAFF AND FACULTY WELCOME RECEPTION

On Monday, August 28, 2000 UCW and the Women’s Center hosted a welcome reception for new female hires (January 2000 to August 2000). The event was held at the Margaret Sloss Women’s Center from 4:00 to 6:00 pm. New faculty and staff (117) received a 8 ½ X 5 ½ invitation postcard in early August. Dean and Department Executive Officers (87) were also invited to attend the reception. Approximately 60-75 people attended the event throughout the two-hour reception.

Recommendations for fall 2001 reception include inviting new female hires from August of the previous year. Individuals beginning at Iowa State University from August to January have not received an invitation in the past.

TOGETHER IN POWER SERIES

Together in Power Series (TIPS) updates the past name for the series, Women in Touch. Two workshops were coordinated this year between UCW and the Women’s Center.

The first workshop was held Tuesday, October 10, 2000 from 8:00 – 10:00 a.m. Barbara Mack, Associate Professor in the Greenlee School of Journalism and Communication, presented “A River Runs Through It.” This workshop addressed personal and professional transitions, how we react and how these transitions impact our families, friends, co-workers, and us. Registration forms were sent by campus mail to former Women in Touch attendees, new female staff and faculty, and also given to UCW committee members for distribution. Approximately 44 people attended this breakfast workshop. The meal included the Memorial Union’s “Cyclone Breakfast” (eggs, fruit, pastries, coffee, juice, and fresh fruit). Registration cost was $12 per person. Food was $9 per plate. Registration was done through direct invitations to new female hires, friends of the Women’s Center, and former TIPS attendees. Registrations were received by Marcia Purdy in the Women’s Center by email, telephone, or fax.

The second workshop was held on Tuesday, March 27, 2001. Tracey Owens Patton, Assistant Professor in the Greenlee School of Journalism and Communication presented “Who Me? Racism and Sexism on Campus.” This informative workshop touched on a topic needing much attention. Flyers were distributed to UCW members for posting. Registration was exclusively electronic. A web page was linked to the UCW site. Approximately 43 people attended. Lunch was a potato bar with salad. The cost was $10 per plate. Invitations were not sent this semester and registration numbers were not impacted by this change. Two ads were placed in the Daily for a total of $180. Registrations were processed online. The Daily ads were important to announce this workshop because of the new implementation of electronic registration but did not allow UCW to break even with this workshop.
Both workshops received positive evaluations from the attendees. A few people on campus expressed frustration about not receiving a personal invitation.

Recommendations for next year:

1) Plan the workshops well in advance.
2) Begin distribution announcing the workshops early and repeat.
3) Utilize email distribution lists of the YWCA, Catt Center, Women’s Studies, Women’s Center and UCW.
4) Announce workshops in Inside ISU, the Daily, and on the Iowa State University web page news.
5) Continue electronic registration to reduce cost and time paper invitations take to process through campus mail and receive response.
6) Invite key players on campus directly.

FALL RETREAT & SUBCOMMITTEE ACTIVITY

Three subcommittees evolved during the fall Planning & Development Retreat, September 8, 2000. The Planning & Development retreat was well attended by 28 committee members. Faye Whitaker joined us during the last hour and provided outstanding direction.

MENTORING SUBCOMMITTEE

Members of the University Committee on Women (UCW) identified a need to explore mentoring opportunities for women on the Iowa State campus during a UCW retreat in September 2000. As a result, the “mentoring subcommittee” was born. During subcommittee discussions, the group concluded that women who are new to campus might benefit the most from a new mentorship program. The subcommittee developed a survey to determine whether newly employed women faculty, staff and graduate students at Iowa State would find such a program helpful and whether they would take advantage of it.

MEMBERS

Judy Dolphin         Linda Charles         Julie Harders
Quincie Cooper      Barbara McManus      Tanya Zanish-Belchser
Rayda Krell          Elena Polouchkina    Bonnie Dix
Margie Tabor

THE SURVEY

A confidential, 14-question survey was distributed via email in April 2001 to 140 women who were new to campus. The names of the survey recipients were gathered from lists of new faculty and staff at ISU. The survey was sent to women faculty, professional and scientific staff and merit employees, and 60 surveys were returned.
The survey defined a mentor as a person who shares her experience, knowledge, and skills with someone less experienced, and provides guidance and support in a variety of ways. With the survey, the subcommittee hoped to find out how many of the women recently arrived to Iowa State would be interested in a professional mentoring relationship, and if so, some specifics about the amount of time and when they would be able to meet with a mentor. We collected demographic information as well.

We did not include questions on the survey that would be related to the mentoring relationship (request that the mentor be someone in your academic discipline, similar profession, etc.) or the topics/issues people would be interested in pursuing. The purpose of the survey was only to gauge interest. If there were sufficient interest in developing a mentoring program, these kinds of questions would be included in an “application” form that would be used to match mentees with mentors.

**THE FINDINGS**

The survey results indicate the following:

- Of the 60 surveys returned, about half of the respondents indicated that they would be interested in receiving more information about a mentoring program, and that most preferred to meet during the workday. The majority of negative responses resulted from their inability to participate in a mentoring program during working hours.

- The majority of respondents interested in a mentoring program were faculty and P&S staff between the ages of 30-49.

- Each person was asked to decide on the relative importance of each item in regard to how each influenced their decision to accept their current position. The five issues were:

  1. Amount of pay
  2. Location of position
  3. Hours of position
  4. Opportunity for professional development and/or advancement
  5. Personal reasons

Respondents rated the opportunity for professional development/advancement as the most important reason for accepting their current position. Personal reasons and location of position were also highly important.

Some of the comments included with the responses included:

- “Encourages this program.”
- “Requests mentor with same ethnic background.”
- “The program is a great concept, although I am unable to participate.”
- “Main reason not interested is that I am not working in a field I consider a long-term commitment.”
- “Currently uses mentoring service in a faculty-mentoring program through her department.”
- “Needs more information on mentoring.”
- “Already finished a one-year mentoring program.”

**CONCLUSION**

As demonstrated through the survey results and comments, we believe there is support to develop a mentoring program for women who are new to campus. We would also recommend that there should be further study of whether such a program is desired among the new female graduate student population.
The mentoring subcommittee proposes implementation of a mentoring pilot project in the fall semester 2001. The project should be tailored for those who do not already have mentoring opportunities available within their work unit or department. For the pilot project, we will select 16 women who are new to campus and who have indicated an interest in being matched with a mentor. The mentors and mentees will decide how much time they are able to devote to this process, but we would recommend that they meet with each other for at least 1 to 2 hours per month. The mentoring subcommittee will host an event to kick-off the project. At the end of each semester, subcommittee members will meet with the group to gather feedback. The results of the pilot project will be submitted to the University Committee on Women for referral to the Provost’s Office in June 2002.

POLICY SUBCOMMITTEE

MEMBERS

Dianne Bystrom  Jill Bystydzienksi
Shauna Hallmark  Nancy Knight
Barbara Lograsso

This is a follow-up and final report to the preliminary report received by your office on February 12, 2001. This report was approved and endorsed by the University Committee on Women (UCW) at its April 26, 2001 meeting.

The UCW Policy Subcommittee has been working this year to assist the Provost’s Office in collecting information and sentiments regarding university personnel policies. This focus has been particularly important during 2000-2001 as the leave policies are being reviewed. The UCW assisted Human Resources with a focus group to discuss current leave policies during the summer of 2000. As another mechanism of gathering concerns and information, the subcommittee decided to create a link on the UCW website where Iowa State University students, staff and faculty could send e-mails. Respondents were promised that the concerns would be reported to the appropriate university officials.

Six concerns were received between January 31 and April 1, 2001. Concerns were acknowledged with a return e-mail that reminded the respondents that the concerns would be forwarded. The subcommittee believed it was beneficial for the Provost’s Office to have the complete e-mail texts for better understanding of the issues raised. Certain identifying words and phrases were removed or changed as we promised confidentiality to the respondents.

RETIREMENT BENEFITS

1. I am a 62 1/2 year old secretary and have been at ISU for about 24 years. I was told recently that I couldn’t retire early with benefits; I must work until age 65 years and 2 months. Then, of course, Medicare will kick in. I realize I could quit any time I want, but I have always had the single health plan and, quite honestly, couldn’t afford to quit and have to pay whatever the cost is for health insurance in the interim. Frankly, I would have to get a part-time job to pay whatever the health insurance would amount to. I can’t believe I am the only one on campus feeling this terrible let down. To think that after all these years there will be NO retirement provisions for me. It seems very
wrong to leave it up to the individual departments to have to come up with this money. If I had known this years ago I would have only interviewed and taken jobs with departments with a lot of money. In these times, when large companies are giving incentives for their senior employees to retire early, this action seems very wrong. My husband was diagnosed with Dementia/Alzheimer's 2 years ago. I don’t know how much longer it will be safe to leave him home alone and come to work. When people get slightly older, all kinds of health problems can become large issues at home. And silly old me thought perhaps early retirement may have helped me out in this bad situation. I was sadly wrong.

PROMOTION AND LAYOFF ISSUES

2. I started my employment with ISU in the Merit System for 3+ years, then moved into another position, which I held for nearly 4 years, when our contract was not renewed. There were three of us with Master’s degrees who were considered laid-off. A clause had been put into our contract two years prior to the lay-off that gave another organization the right to fire us. The organization did just that. We filed grievances. ISU paid our unemployment even though the other organization let us go and hired other people to replace us. I finally asked to be back on the Merit list in October and was hired in January of this year. My concern is that after almost eight years of continuous employment with ISU and having excellent performance appraisals and evaluations, I have lost all seniority rights and am now considered a new employee and starting at step one of the Secretary II position. I was forced to take this position because I needed to pay my student loans and my unemployment was running out. This meant I took a $10,000 drop in pay. This is immoral and there need to be more protection for good ISU employees.

3. My concern is with promotional issues. There is no regard for work ethics. It isn’t what you do or how hard you work, but who you know. I have seen it happen where a person gets promoted by reclassification or transferred within a department to a higher paying position and the job is not even offered to anyone with seniority, whether they know the position or not. What kind of incentive does clerical staff have if this procedure continues? I would think in order to keep a good employee who is devoted and loyal to their position, they would want them to stay, but no. You hear ‘Well you have to do what you must and you will be missed.’ Then you get the reputation of a ‘squeaky wheel’ and ‘complainer’. This is a concern that many clerical staff have. We need some incentive to continue to do a good job and be a ‘team’.

MATERNITY/PATERNITY LEAVE

4. I’ve been reviewing the maternity leave policies and FMLA as applied at ISU, and came across something that concerns me. It states on page 3.65 of the FMLA policy: ‘If both parents work for ISU, and request a leave due to birth, adoption, or placement of a foster child, the twelve week leave period is for both parents combined. The couple do not each have twelve weeks of FLMA available.’ This appears to be discriminatory toward double spouse employees of the university. If I worked at ISU and my husband elsewhere, I would have twelve weeks Maternity Leave for my own use and he would have twelve weeks for his. The law itself states that ‘A husband and wife who are eligible for FMLA leave and are employed by the same covered employer, MAY BE limited to a combined total of twelve weeks of leave during any twelve month period...’ (29 CFR 825.202) It seems it would go a long way to showing concern about employees and their families if ISU would take the more generous approach and grant every employee, regardless of employment of spouse, twelve weeks for the care of a child.

5. I have recently been enlightened on the details (or lack of details) concerning the maternity leave policy here at ISU. My colleague just experienced a very difficult and stressful pregnancy. She was advised at the six-month mark to stay bed-ridden, after she had been hospitalized and feared she
would lose the baby. However, because she did not have the necessary sick and vacation time built up and she knew that she would need the six weeks after the baby was born, she continued to work through her pregnancy. Thankfully, everything turned out great. However, the maternity leave policy here at ISU has a lot to be desired. As one of Iowa's largest employers, it disturbs me that we haven’t gotten with the 21st century and updated our maternity leave to reflect that of the corporate world. The corporate world is now offering paid paternity leave for fathers! The focus of ISU this year is ‘Strengthening Families.’ Shouldn’t we start with our own employees? We all know that research proves how important it is for a mother and her child to bond the first year of life. If a mother is worried about using up all her sick/vacation leave to bear a child, what does that do to 'strengthen family'? Children are sick quite often – mothers need that sick leave and vacation time to tend to their sick children after they are born. They shouldn’t have to worry about expending it on maternity leave.

6. My concern is the lack of maternity and paternity leave for university employees. It seems somewhat archaic that in 2001 a state university still does not recognize maternity leave as a separate and viable necessity. Maternity leave should not be treated as an illness or as a vacation. Why then are women forced to use accumulated sick leave and vacation time in order to compile an adequate maternity leave period? What is the alternative for someone who does not have sufficient accumulations of sick leave and vacation? What are these new parents to do? Furthermore, if a new parent uses up all available sick leave and vacation time to create a maternity leave, then there is nothing left to use in case of a baby’s illness or their own lost time due to illness. Most families simply cannot afford to take extended, unpaid, time off from work. This is not a family-friendly policy; it creates undue stress and ill will between employer and employee. This problem needs to be corrected immediately. A minimum 6-week paid maternity leave policy would be a step in the right direction. To extend this period—with their supervisor’s permission—employees would be expected to use their accumulated sick time and vacation days. A policy such as this is not progressive—it is the norm at most companies. Iowa State University needs to step up and correct a long-ignored problem.

FUTURE PLANS OF THE UCW POLICY SUBCOMMITTEE

The UCW Policy Subcommittee appreciates the opportunity to provide this input to the Provost’s Office on faculty, staff and student concerns as to personnel policies and hope that this feedback is helpful in reviewing and, when necessary, revising these policies. The subcommittee’s focus for the next few months will be to monitor the effects of budget cuts on women’s programs and women employees at Iowa State University. The subcommittee will collect both quantitative and qualitative data on the impact of budget cuts on women’s programs and women’s employees—e.g., the percentage and total dollar amount of cuts to women’s programs and in comparison to other university programs; the number of women employees whose positions are reduced or eliminated; and stories from women employees describing the impact of budget cuts on their professional and personal lives. Our concern is that budget cuts may have a disproportionate effect on women’s programs and women employees and, as a result, negatively impact the climate for women faculty, staff and students at the university as well as members of the larger community. We will look forward to sharing this information with you.

The following is a copy of the preliminary report forwarded to the Provost concerning budget cut impacts on women’s programs:
CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT CENTER FOR WOMEN AND POLITICS

The Catt Center's budget was cut 3%, or $5,182, or a little more than the 2.8% cut sustained by the college overall. The cut will reduce the Center's supplies and services budget by 26%, as the Center chose not to cut back on its 2.75 staff members. Several programs will be cut as a result, including the annual summer leadership workshop for high school students, now in its 9th year, and the campus visits of the Carrie Chapman Catt Research Prize recipients. In addition, the number of student employees will be reduced and student programming (supplies) will be reduced.

PROGRAM FOR WOMEN IN SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING

Budget cut will result in a reduction from 5 staff members to 4.

WOMEN’S CENTER

The Dean of Students Office has indicated the same dollar amount ($860) will be available for the 2001-2002 academic year. The Provost’s Office stated that there would be a slight reduction (3% or $495) in supplies ($16,497 for FY 00). This marks the fourth consecutive year of supply reductions from the Provost’s Office.

WOMEN’S STUDIES PROGRAM

The program was cut 2%, which will result in reducing the secretary for all Cross-Disciplinary Programs (Women's Studies, African American Studies, and American Indian Studies) from 12 to 9 months.
CAMPUS CLIMATE SUBCOMMITTEE

MEMBERS

Nancy Bevin        Laura Armstrong
Erin Rosacker     Yalem Teshome
Blue Maas         Theresa McCormick

In 2000-01, the UCW Campus Climate subcommittee studied the Friends of International Women (FIW). FIW is an organization formed thirty years ago with the purpose of assisting international women (students, visiting scholars, and wives of students/scholars) to feel more at home in a new cultural environment. We selected this organization because we believe that it provides a vital service to the University (as well as to the larger community) and because its future, for a number of reasons, is in question.

Throughout most of its history, FIW has been an effectively organized union of community and university. In recent years, FIW has depended upon the leadership of one person, an ISU adult student (U.S.) with international experience as well as strong local ties. Working in collaboration with a liaison supported by International Educational Services, FIW welcomed newly arrived international women into a social organization that (particularly in the case of non-student spouses) served as their primary support system in this country. This model of leadership ended in 2000 when both the long-time President (community volunteer position) and the long-time University liaison (IES) resigned. Because current FIW members are women who juggle volunteer services with full-time employment and family responsibilities, no one felt equal to the demanding tasks associated with community leadership. Meanwhile, the IES office, faced with budget reversions and their attendant staff configuration uncertainties, did not immediately refill the liaison position. This position has since been refilled, but with the tentativeness which accompanies budget reallocations/reversions. Consequently, FIW entered a period of disarray and its future viability remains in doubt.

In August 2000, a meeting was held at the Women’s Center to discuss the future of FIW, and to identify short-term arrangements for keeping the organization viable. The Interim Director of the Women’s Center, Nancy Bevin, agreed to lead University discussions, which evolved into the UCW study.

In our study, the UCW sub-committee determined the following:

• The educational experience of all ISU contingents (students, faculty, staff) is enriched by the presence of our international guests, and the responsibility to welcome them and to assist their transition to our community is shared by all.

• FIW plays a vital role in relation to this responsibility. The international women served by FIW are students, visiting scholars, and spouses of students and scholars. Depending on their situations, many of these women have limited access to services, which aid their transition into a new culture. Through their membership in FIW, they have the opportunity to practice English, become acclimated to Ames, and build a social network, which may likely become their major support system in this country.

• The friendship formed in FIW help international students and their families (particularly non-student spouses) cope with problems associated with the discomforts of cultural transition: confusion, isolation, depression, stress, and loneliness. According to Chuck Cychosz, a DPS official, these psycho/social experiences figure substantially in cases of
domestic violence, and the major factor in prevention is the social connection provided by organizations such as FIW.

Through addressing these important needs, FIW contributes significantly to the University’s mission to attract and retain students and scholars from around the world. Importantly, 83% of all international graduate students work for the University, as either teaching or research assistants (1,345 in Spring 2000). This translates as half of all TA’s and RA’s. Quite simply, the University depends heavily on international students, who in turn depend on University for providing an environment of hospitality.

At present, FIW members have not reached consensus concerning the degree to which their organization should be more fully and officially embedded within the University. Their history and tradition as a volunteer community organization is meaningful to them, and they hope largely to sustain that identity. However, the creation of more secure and dependable ties with the University, notably two offices funded partially by the Provost, seems desirable and necessary for this sustenance. Toward that end, the UCW subcommittee requested that the Provost: 1) publicly recognize the valuable contribution of FIW to the University and the larger community; 2) acknowledge the crucial role played by IES in serving as a liaison between international women and FIW; 3) continue working with IES and UCW to consider ways in which the needs of international women might be more formally and consistently addressed by the University.

On April 23, a celebration in honor of the 30th anniversary of FIW was held in the Campanile Room. International Education Services, Women Studies, Margaret Sloss Women’s Center, and UCW sponsored this event. Speakers included Provost Richmond, IES Director Dennis Peterson, and Judy Dolphin, YWCA. The event was well attended, and UCW subcommittee members concur that it did help focus renewed attention on FIW.

The committee recommends that support for FIW continue as a topic of study and discussion for UCW.