

Annual Report
President's Commission on the Status of Women
Academic Year 2008 – 2009
Trece Mettauer and Dawn Zitney, Co-Chairs

Summary of Accomplishments

After discussing the work in the previous year to establish a Women's Center on campus at the September meeting of the Commission, members decided to ask the Commission's Standing Committee on Violence Against Women (VAW), to provide more data to support the need for a Women's Center before the Commission would press the issue further. Members further decided to refocus the group's energy on two new initiatives, a Pay Equity Study for faculty (and eventually staff) and the development of a Consensual Relationship Policy. These new initiatives were in addition to the ongoing effort of its working groups on a Childcare Study, Lactation Policy and a Sex Education Program. We will begin with a progress report on the Working Groups' efforts.

For 35 years the Women's Commission (WC) has been working towards creating a childcare facility on campus that meets the demands of students, staff, and faculty. Although the Women's Commission has historically fought for the construction of this facility, we do not see it solely as a women's issue. Rather, it is a university issue, one which affects all employees with young families, GLBT, and people of color alike.

Qualitative and quantitative data gathered from various campus resources has shown that there is insufficient childcare on campus. University parents of young children continue to struggle, usually quietly and beyond view, to balance their work and parental roles. The Women's Commission has received the support of the President's Commissions on the Status of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Issues and the Status of People of Color. Conversations with President Huddleston and other campus administrators have made the childcare issue more visible to all members of the community. In April, the Working Group sent a request to the President asking that he "implement an official Childcare Committee or Task Force to develop a comprehensive plan for the creation of adequate and accessible child care services on campus to meet the needs and demand of faculty, staff and students." They suggested a target date of August 2013 for the center's opening. We await the President's response.

At the Commission's end of the year meeting, Donna Marie Sorrentino reported that the Lactation Policy was sent to Sharon Demers to be shared with Dick Cannon and the President's Cabinet. Donna Marie spoke to Bruce Mallory, Provost, and he confirmed that the Cabinet has informally acknowledged receipt of the policy. Donna Marie will follow-up with Sharon Demers to see if we can get formal acknowledgement and an update of the policy. The Commission will work with Donna Marie to ensure progress on this important initiative.

Working with many interested groups and offices on campus, the First Year Programming Working Group (formerly the Sex Education Program), has developed a Pilot Program to be implemented in the 2009 – 2010 academic year. The series will be called *The Courage to Know - Community Building*. The first session will take place on September 23: Women and use of alcohol and other drugs. Three other sessions are in the planning stages.

The Violence Against Women Standing Committee and the Affirmative Action and Equity Office have taken the lead on developing a Consensual Relationship Policy for UNH. At this time the policy is in rough draft form. The President and Provost have asked for the WC/VAW to bring the policy forward. Donna Marie Sorrentino is talking with Bruce Mallory and Mary Mayhew, Director of the Sexual Harassment and Rape Prevention Program (SHARRP) regarding a strategy for moving this forward to the faculty senate and the professional standards committee (part of the senate). After receiving their support, the next step will be to go to the faculty union.

It is the goal of the Women's Commission to institutionalize a pay equity study for both faculty and staff at the University. It has been almost 20 years since UNH has conducted a pay equity study for faculty. Completing this study is a goal that the commission also shares with President Huddleston and the President's Commissions on the Status of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Issues and the Status of People of Color. During the past year, the Women's Commission began garnering support for the study by talking with women faculty and University administrators. The intention is to put in place a process that will be repeated at regular intervals in the future. In the coming year, representatives from the Faculty Senate and the AAUP will be contacted. Once a review process for faculty pay equity is in place, the Commission will turn its attention to equity issues for staff.

Goals for 2009 – 2010

In addition to continuing to make progress on the child care study, lactation policy and first year programming, the Commission hopes to implement the faculty pay equity study, receive approval for a consensual relationship policy at UNH, investigate and address concerns raised about inequities in the application of the Family Medical Leave Policy, develop leadership training for women student leaders, enhance marketing of the Women's Commission and conduct more programming for staff members at UNH.

Challenges for Upcoming Year

The financial crisis at UNH will impact many of the initiatives the Women's Commission is endeavoring to complete. A pay equity study requires funds unless conducted by people on campus. The history at UNH is to distrust the results of studies performed in-house. If the pay equity study is to be successful, the Commission must devise a strategy that produces useful, valid data, and a process that may be repeated in the future. This poses a significant challenge.

Money is also at the center of the University's inability to offer affordable, accessible child care to families in our community. However, Commission members feel the more important stumbling block has been a reluctance to identify child care as an issue of importance – one that impacts the performance and well-being of the people who work here. With the progress made this year, the Commission will work hard to prevent this critical issue from being supplanted by other concerns.

Finally, we anticipate resistance to the consensual relationship policy proposal, primarily from faculty. Any behind the scenes work that can be done to persuade faculty that such a policy is in the best interests of all members of our community should be undertaken.