



Commission for Women Annual Report

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Chair, Commission for Women, 2006–2007

PENNSTATE



COMMISSION *for* WOMEN

During 2006–07, the Commission for Women (CFW) enjoyed an exciting state of transition. For the first time in twenty-five years, the CFW operated with a new organizational structure. The goals for the year included implementing the new structure, developing a new marketing plan, finding a new home for the Technical Services Workshop and Mentoring Program, and transferring our Intercollegiate Athletics Committee to the Joint Commissions Committee.

We began the year by hosting an annual retreat, at which time we introduced the new structure. In short, the new organizational plan involved collapsing all committees into three main entities: the Assessment, Issues, and Marketing committees. The commission continued to include:

- a representative serving as campus liaison
- the past chair overseeing nominations and awards programs
- a contact person organizing the luncheon

Assessment, Issues, and Marketing served as the three main committees. The Assessment Committee studied the status of women at Penn State. Its members gathered and analyzed data in an effort to identify issues affecting women at the University. The goals were two-fold: identify issues and maintain validating data. Once identified, issues were to be passed on to the Issues Committee. The Issues Committee was charged with developing possible solutions to concerns and issues, and the Marketing Committee was charged with increasing the commission's visibility, as this had been identified as an area of concern. The commission activated this new structure in an effort to become more issues oriented. Members felt that we had become a very programmatic commission over time and, on some level, were not in touch with issues affecting women at Penn State.

One step in implementing this new structure involved successfully transitioning the annual technical services workshop—in existence for thirteen years—to Auxiliary and Business Services (ABS). The commission continued to provide financial support for the program and the CFW name was used in all marketing efforts, however, ABS organized the event. The program was very well received and featured the largest audience to date. This year, CFW also explored options for relocating the Mentoring Program and, in the interim, coordinated a successful program with approximately twenty-three participants.

Another major change this year reflected our decision to host an awards luncheon rather than a dinner banquet. Members felt the effort to plan and organize the banquet did not represent the best use of the commission's time, nor did the banquet provide a great deal of value to women at Penn State. Members did feel, however, that recognizing outstanding women at Penn State via the Rosemary Schraer and seven Achieving Women awards was extremely worthy. To this end, the commission hosted an awards luncheon that recognized outstanding women at Penn State. The event was a success, and tickets sold out in the first week. The commission will reserve a larger space for next year's event.

Another aspect of CFW's reorganization involved relocating the Intercollegiate Athletics Committee to a subcommittee of the Joint Commissions Committee (JCC). Members of

the Commission for Women, Commission on Racial/Ethnic Diversity, and Commission on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Equity felt that issues addressed by this committee spanned all three commissions and that discussing them jointly was the most efficient and inclusive way to resolve them.

In summary, the CFW made great strides this year toward its goal of becoming more issues oriented. More needs to be done as the new committees take time to gather and analyze data. We are excited to move forward with our new structure and look forward to another productive year.

Summary of 2006–07 Commission for Women Activities

1. Fall retreat in August 2006 introduced our new structure to attendees
2. Held focus groups with the following constituencies: faculty, technical service employees, students, and representatives from Penn State campuses other than University Park
3. Annual meeting with President Spanier
4. In November 2006, twenty CFW members attended the Pennsylvania Governor's Conference for Women
5. Mentoring Program included twelve pairs of participants
6. Continued to have a representative from the CFW serve as a campus liaison to facilitate communication among University Park and the other campuses
7. First annual awards luncheon attended by more than 400 people
8. Developed new wordmark/visual identity
9. Re-designed the CFW Web site
10. Updated bylaws to reflect a separation of the Nominations and Awards committees

2006–07 Commission for Women Committee Reports

CFW Assessment Committee

Chair: Auden Thomas

In 2005–06, CFW reorganized its committee structure to intentionally move away from a programming emphasis and toward an equity orientation. Two results of this restructuring were the new Assessment and Issues committees. Together, they began to assess women's status (Assessment Committee) and address problem areas for women (Issues Committee).

During 2006–07, Auden Thomas chaired the Assessment Committee and worked to reinvigorate President John Oswald's 1981 charge that the commission "serve as an advisory group to the President of the University on the status of women at Penn State, to serve as an advocate for women's concerns and to recommend solutions." (1981–2001:

Status of Women at Penn State, Informational Report submitted to University Faculty Senate, p. vii). To that end, the committee gathered, reviewed, and synthesized institutional data pertaining to women's status; interpreted those data and identified inequities; and then made recommendations to remedy particular problem areas using best practices from the literature and/or other institutions.

Initial assessment efforts of this new committee intentionally focused on both historical and contemporary contexts: (1) a historical review of previous assessment efforts by CFW, as well as related efforts by the Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment, University Faculty Senate, and other groups; (2) review of current assessment efforts on all Commonwealth campuses; and (3) comparison of recent assessment efforts vis-à-vis other Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC) institutions.

A review of the history of assessment of women's status at Penn State revealed that attention dedicated to any particular issue had not been regular, periodic, systematic, or sustained. Similarly, the committee's review of efforts on each of the Commonwealth campuses revealed that such efforts are decentralized, irregular, and subject to the vagaries of volunteers who spearhead an effort—in sum, a very similar situation to what is occurring at University Park.

The committee concluded that future CFW efforts to improve the status of women at Penn State across all campuses needs to be pro-active rather than reactive, focus on institutional data rather than anecdotal evidence, and be designed to make lasting changes in women's status within the institution rather than create programming about or by women.

Much of the year was spent on several specific efforts: student issues assessment using several data sources, issues facing fixed-term faculty, and a review of data collected by CFW in 2002-03 as part of its Tenured Faculty Study. In addition, we collaborated with the Women in the Sciences and Engineering Institute (WISE) to consider the numerical representation of students/faculty using the Data Warehouse, and investigated comparable status assessment efforts at CIC institutions. Research briefs summarizing those efforts are available from the commission upon request.

Perhaps the most important activity undertaken by the Assessment Committee during 2006–07 was to begin a plan and process to establish a mechanism for longitudinal tracking of key status indicators. By doing so, factors such as numerical under-representation, salary disparities, inequitable policies, and chilly climate issues relating to women can be identified and tracked longitudinally. The committee intends that these data will provide a foundation so that, in partnership with other Penn State offices and organizations, and using comparable data from peer institutions, the committee will be able to make appropriate recommendations for change. The committee's primary interest is to work strategically and in partnerships to build momentum for a sustained effort that will provide the continuity of data availability and analysis necessary for future commission members to carry on its equity efforts.

The Assessment Committee ended 2006–07 with plans for a daylong work session during summer 2007 to develop a template of key status indicators for faculty, staff, and students that can be auto-populated each year and used for longitudinal tracking. In addition, it plans to share an overview of its activities at the commission's fall 2007 retreat to provide a shared jumping-off point for next year's initiatives.

Issues Committee

Chair: Elisha Clark and Robin Guillard

We anticipated that the Issues Committee would experience some levels of uncertainty this year. We knew that the Assessment Committee would need at least a year before it would be able to forward any substantive issues to the Issues Committee. It is our hope that the Issues Committee will play a more active role next year.

Marketing Committee

Chair: Monica Nachman

This year we wanted to lay the ground work for a marketing plan that could be implemented next year. Part of that plan involved developing a new wordmark and signature graphic. Mike Brahosky of the Office of the Vice Provost for Educational Equity developed a new visual identity for us that is fresh and exciting. This new identity was printed for the first time on our invitation to the awards luncheon and has been used on numerous marketing materials that will be distributed next year. In addition, the commission developed a new brochure and oversaw the redesign of its Web site, ensuring that the appearance and content of both reflect our new structure.

Nominations and Awards Committee

Chair: Karen L. Schultz

The Nominations and Awards Committee coordinated the process of replenishing the commission's outgoing membership, electing the 2007–08 chair-elect, and electing members of the 2007–08 Executive Committee.

In addition, the committee coordinated the process, advertisement, and selection of the Rosemary Schraer Mentoring Award and the Achieving Women Awards winners, all of whom were recognized at the first annual spring luncheon. Award recipients for 2007 were:

Rosemary Schraer Mentoring Award: Catharina Cunning, director of University Fellowships Office

Achieving Women Awards:

Technical Service: Sharon Corl, maintenance worker, Area Landscape, Office of Physical Plant

Faculty: Kathryn LaNoue, Distinguished Professor, College of Medicine

Staff Nonexempt: Jennifer Allshouse, police services officer, Penn State Harrisburg

Staff Exempt: Jayashree Sonti, financial officer, Office of the Corporate Controller

Administrator: Judith Todd, P.B. Breneman Department Head Chair, College of Engineering

Graduate Student: Shereen Abdel Kader, Ph.D. candidate, Early Childhood Education

Undergraduate Student: Olivia Hamilton, Psychological and Social Sciences major, Women's Studies minor, Penn State Abington

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