



Commission for Women Annual Report

2008–2009

Molly Wertheimer, Chair



Mission

The Commission for Women (CFW) serves as an advisory group to the President of the University on the status of women at Penn State, advocates for women's concerns, and recommends solutions.

Since 1981, the commission has identified areas of concern for the women employees and students of Penn State. It is a forum for exchanging ideas that can translate into improved policies and practices to support women at Penn State.

Specifically, the commission:

Examines and makes recommendations about issues that affect women employees and students, including workplace and classroom climate; recruitment, advancement, and retention; mentoring; professional development and recognition; family leave, maternity, and child/elder-care policies; salary equity; and intercollegiate athletics;

Collaborates with units/colleges/campuses/organizations in support of gender-equity initiatives; and

Recognizes and celebrates the contributions and achievements of women at Penn State.

2008–2009 Initiatives and Activities

This year, the commission focused on achieving its goals by (1) collaborating with other groups devoted to diversity both inside and outside of the University community; (2) energizing its various committees including executive, standing, ad hoc, program, and liaison committees; and (3) working to make its operating processes and procedures more efficient.

Collaborations

The commission cosponsored a number of events and initiatives with student groups such as the Women's Studies Graduate Student Organization; the Black Graduate Student Association; Supporting Women in Geography; and the University Park Undergraduate Association. The commission collaborated with the Women's Leadership Initiative to coordinate and fund transportation for University employees and students to attend the Pennsylvania Governor's Conference for Women in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on October 2, 2008.

In addition, the commission collaborated with a number of other units to support the University's diversity mission. Such collaborations included the Martin Luther King, Jr. Banquet, International Women's Day, the annual Technical Service Women's Workshop, and the annual Women's Leadership Summit, presented by Penn State's Milton S. Hershey Medical Center.

Commission members attended the Board of Trustees breakfast meeting in January 2009 to provide information about CFW initiatives. The commission also submitted to Educational Equity detailed feedback on the draft strategic plan and the Framework to Foster Diversity.

Together with the State College Branch of The American Association of University Women, the commission supported a "Lobby Talk" entitled, *Where the Girls Are: Gender Equity in Education*, November 13, 2008. Members of the commission from eleven campuses met with leaders from the Coalition of Pennsylvania Crime victims, the Survivors Speakers Bureau, and the Centre County Women's Resource Center to talk about what we can do to help solve the problem of violence against university women, especially students.

Energizing Existing Committees

Full commission monthly business meetings consisted of an initial open house at the Hintz Family Alumni Center (September 12) and a retreat at Pollock Commons (October 8). Other business meetings featured University experts who could provide information about Penn State's policies and practices in areas of concern to our committees and constituents. These meetings were open to the public; guest speakers included:

December 3, 2008

Dr. Blannie Bowen, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, spoke about the University's tenure flow rates and exit interview data;

January 27, 2009

Billie Willits, Associate Vice President for Human Resources, and Mary Beahm, Consultant for Human Resources, spoke about Broad banding at Penn State;

February 24, 2009

Dr. Robert Drago, Professor of Labor Studies and Women's Studies, and Dr. Kelly Davis, Research Associate in Gerontology, spoke about family leave policies at the University and other Big Ten universities;

April 1, 2009

Gordon Turow, University Architect and Director of Campus Planning and Design, and Linda Pierce, Manager of Policy Development and Quality of Work/Life, Office of Human Resources, updated us on the University's plans for a new childcare facility in Hort Woods.

Executive Committee

Monthly executive committee meetings provide committee chairs an opportunity to report on their progress and to seek advice from commission officers, other committee chairs, and members-at-large. Each meeting consisted of a budget review, committee progress reports, event planning, and discussions about internal processes and procedures.

Standing Committees

1. Assessment Committee, co-chairs: Alicia Knoedler and Tracy Vrablik

The committee finished and released the *2007–2008 Report on the Status of Women at Penn State*, and continued to identify other information on gender to include in future reports. In discussions with Dr. W. Terrell Jones, the committee made plans to update information contained in the report during 2008–2009 and 2009–2010. These annual updates will include one to two pages of new data in a PDF file and will be available online. In addition, committee members plan to prepare another printed full fold-out report for 2010–2011.

2. Marketing Committee, co-chairs: Jennifer Pencek and Melissa Wilson

The committee focused on outreach to the University community, especially to students. The committee created a Commission for Women Facebook page, which currently has 126 members and is generating ideas for programming during 2009–2010. In addition, the committee issued press releases when the *2007–2008 Report on the Status of Women at Penn State* was published. Members also advertised the book, *We Are a Strong Articulate Voice: A History of Women at Penn State*, by Carol Sonenklar under the auspices of the CFW, in several participating Barnes and Noble campus bookstores. Committee members also attended various events at University Park to advertise the commission.

Ad hoc Issues Committees

During the commission's October 3, 2007, retreat, attendees developed a list of prioritized gender-based issues of concern to women at the University. The commission's executive committee approved the study of three areas: wage equity, child/elder-care, and family leave. During 2008–2009, the commission retained these ad hoc committees and began collecting data, consulting experts, and studying current policies, practices, and CIC benchmarks. Results of this work are summarized below.

1. Wage Equity, *co-chairs: Cathy Dufour and Nikki Massaro Kauffman*

This committee focused on perceived gender-based inequities occurring within the new competencies based broad-banding system. The committee worked with the Office of Human Resources to refine a series of Frequently Asked Questions to post on the OHR and CFW Web sites. To help university women do well in salary discussions with their supervisors, committee members arranged sessions during the Women's Leadership Conference in early April on "Negotiation Skills for Women in the Workplace."

2. Family Leave, *chair: Melissa Doberstein*

This committee hired professionals to run six focus groups of University faculty and staff to identify family leave practices across different units at University Park and the Harrisburg campuses. Audio tapes of those sessions were transcribed. Committee members all received Institutional Review Board clearance and will continue to meet in 2009–10 to interpret the data generated and to develop a report of findings. In addition, the committee solicited a report comparing family leave policies at Big Ten universities to determine how Penn State compared to others in the CIC. That report is available at

<http://lser.la.psu.edu/workfam/Big10parentalleavefinal.doc>.

3. Child/Elder-care, *chair: Barbara Schaefer*

Although there seemed to be considerable interest in quality, affordable child care for faculty, staff, and students at Penn State, the commission was not able to identify people who were able to work on this issue.

Program Committees

1. Mentoring Program Committee, *co-chairs: Laurie Schoonhoven and Christy Long*

Eleven mentor/protégé pairs participated in this year's program, which consisted of individual activities as well as monthly sessions on topics such as professional networking, leadership, self-promotion, conflict resolution, and so on. The committee worked to ensure that women from all employment classifications were represented. They refocused the programming to include an initial skill-building/goal-setting workshop and to invite speakers to address topics generated by the participants. Committee members also worked on building an archive. They explored ways to extend the mentor program to the campuses.

2. Luncheon Committee, *co-chairs: Dianne Crust and Marcella Fickes*

The third annual spring awards luncheon took place on Friday, April 10 at The Penn Stater Conference Center Hotel. More than 530 guests attended. The keynote speaker was Louise Sandmeyer, executive director of Planning and Institutional Assessment, who talked about the *2007–2008 Report on the Status of Women at Penn State* and its implications.

This year's award winners included:

Rosemary Schraer Mentoring Award

Linda C. Higginson, assistant dean for advising, Undergraduate Education

Achieving Women Awards

Lori J. Bechtel-Wherry, administrator, chancellor at Penn State Altoona

Deloris Brobeck, staff nonexempt, staff assistant in Undergraduate Education

Maurine G. Claver, staff exempt, director of Environmental Health and Safety, Office of Physical Plant

Christin Morrow, graduate student in chemistry, Eberly College of Science

Carol Schafer, faculty, associate professor of Theatre, Integrative Arts and Women's Studies, Penn State Beaver

Sandra D. Wagner, technical service, residence hall utility worker in Housing and Food Services, Penn State Hazleton

Brianne Wilburne, undergraduate student in mechanical engineering, College of Engineering

3. Campus Liaisons, *chair: Alice Royer*

This committee reports commission activities at campuses other than University Park. The commission provided funding for programs at ten campuses, including the away meeting at Penn State Mont Alto. The committee also held an annual meeting immediately prior to the awards luncheon for campus liaisons. Members from eleven campuses brought

their best practices, issues, and concerns; they also heard about state and other resources to combat violence against women.

4. Staff Advisory Council, liaison: *Marylou Martz*

The commission's representative reported a number of SAC initiatives during the 2008–2009 academic year, including a report on the University's competencies program, an SRDP focus group, and a meeting with President Spanier to discuss work/life issues and the results of the faculty/staff survey. This council also planned to work on supervisory training and a staff mentoring program.

5. University Faculty Senate Committee on Educational Equity (EECE) and Campus Environment, liaison: *Negar Davis*

The EECE committee sponsored a presentation of the *2007–2008 Report on the Status of Women at Penn State* to the University Faculty Senate. This report was presented by Alicia Knoedler on December 8, 2008.

Processes and Procedures

The commission reviewed some of its operating procedures and decided to change a few of them to achieve more efficiency and fairness, including:

An increase in the level of grants available to campus liaisons for programming;

All groups asking for grants will be required to fill out a form that will be placed on the CFW Web site. Groups will be asked to explain how their events further the mission of the CFW.

Additional cost centers will be added to the budget, including one for grants.

The commission will keep records dating back to the last three years in the liaison's office. All other material will be reviewed for possible archiving. Material archived may be retrieved by request.

This publication is available in alternative media on request.

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