

# WOMEN'S CENTER STRATEGIC PLAN

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Approved 4/13/07

## **Mission**

The mission of the Center is to advocate, educate, and provide support services for the achievement of women's equity at the University and within the community at large.

Special attention is focused on women who face additional challenges due to their race, nationality, class, sexual identity, religion, age, and physical or mental ability.

## **Narrative/Preamble**

In 2004, the Women's Center began the process of creating a new 3 -5 year plan, but the process was put on hold when we were asked to participate in an external review of each of the cultural centers. The review process included writing a self-study and a site visit by a team of reviewers. In December of 2005, we received the report from the review team, which has been incorporated into this version of our plan.

## ***Operational assumptions***

Since the most recent strategic plan was instituted in 1999, the following factors became evident and influenced the creation of this document:

- A focus on strategic planning (i.e. changing the environment) as opposed to long range planning (focusing on a problem)
- The importance of embedding tenets of diversity throughout the goals and objectives of the plan, as opposed to charging a particular committee with addressing these considerations
- The need to create a document that was directed in its agenda, but fluid enough to accommodate the changing University and national landscapes, as well as administrative priorities
- The need to articulate measurable outcomes/strategic directions as opposed to action items that are not accountable to achievement of the mission

## ***Strategic Driving Force***

Our discussions centered on the question of "What will move us towards our mission?" In other words, how can we identify reasonable, achievable, and measurable activities that will effectively change the campus climate in relation to gender equity by providing information/educational opportunities, advocating for women, and supporting women's success as defined by the diverse constituents on campus?

We had several "themes" that were consistently reflected in our discussions:

- The full-time staff could not achieve the mission on our own; therefore, working with individuals and departments throughout the University community to support their work in the service of gender equity is a critical component of our strategy.
- Our work with our student staff, volunteers, and interns is a departmental priority. It provides an opportunity to make a significant impact on the University

community because we have a more sustained and structured connection with students who work at the Center. The experience of working at the Center also enhances the overall academic experience for students.

- The achievement of gender equity must be infused into the “mainstream” of the University, including such University commitments as the Diversity Strategic Action Plan.
- There are populations, particularly women of color, which are underserved and underrepresented both at the Women’s Center and in the University community.
- The collection of data and feedback is an important mechanism for identifying current and emerging trends and needs.
- We value equity and cultural diversity and have made a commitment to working from an anti-racist perspective.
- We need to be concrete and proactive in how we define, cultivate, and enact collaboration.
- Achieving the goal of gender equity requires resources (financial and human capital) and political will.
- Moving forward, our events and activities should be organized to address our strategic goals.
- The Advisory Board structure should reflect the infrastructure needed to move forward with our strategic goals.

### ***Simple rules***

The work of enhancing our collaborative work both internal and external to the Women’s Center continued as we moved ahead with the strategic planning process. In 2002, the full-time staff, student staff, and Advisory Board members worked to develop a set of *Guiding Principles* for the Women’s Center. These principles help guide the day-to-day operations and interactions of the Center. The guiding principles are as follows:

The Women's Center strives to:

- Support the empowerment of all women through action and example.
- Promote a feminist\* perspective and celebrate differences within and amongst all.
- Provide a safe and welcoming space, maintaining open mindedness and showing respect for all in times of crisis as well as in day-to-day interactions.
- Educate the UConn community and the community at large about all forms of oppression by way of community organizing, interaction and education.
- Affect global change through local actions and programs.

\*Feminism is the belief that all women have the right to control their bodies and destinies; the right to live a life free of violence and abuse; the right to equal protection under the law, including equal access to education, employment, and power.

In 2005, the full-time staff continued our discussions about how our personal values are reflected in our work at the Center. This led to the formulation of a set of *Simple Rules*, which more concretely articulate what we value as an organization; what we want to create in our relationships; how we want to function with each other and our constituents; and what is important to us.

The *Simple Rules* are:

- Create justice
- Support and provide challenge
- Ask questions and then listen
- Expect confusion and connect it to growth
- Ask how I am accountable and to whom
- Be respectful

The strategic planning process is one method of identifying strategies for integrating these rules into our policies, procedures, and operations.

### ***Our Vision for this Strategic Plan***

As per our mission, we have identified priority areas that will enhance the Center's role as a powerful change agent on campus. Our goal is to facilitate change that will create gender equity at the University of Connecticut. The impact goals as set out below were the result of a two year process that included a meeting with campus stakeholders to explore perceptions of, priorities for, and changes at the Women's Center during the time of the previous plan; the self-study and external review; a visioning activity with the full-time staff; two sessions with the Advisory Board to review accomplishments of the committees, signature programs, and priority trends and issues; and discussions in committees of impact goals and committee structure.

<b>RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE EXTERNAL REVIEW</b>	<b>IMPACT GOALS</b>	<b>COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENT</b>
Faculty and staff (engage stakeholders in the strategic planning; programs and materials aimed at discrete constituencies)	<i>Identify strategic collaborations to enhance our advocacy role on campus by creating institutional change and capacity-building activities for other departments on campus.</i>	<i>Strategic Planning</i>
Faculty and staff (engage stakeholders in the strategic planning; programs and materials aimed at discrete constituencies)	<i>Identify strategic collaborations to enhance our advocacy role on campus by creating institutional change and capacity-building activities for other departments on campus.</i>	<i>Strategic Marketing</i>
Faculty and staff (engage stakeholders in the strategic planning; programs and materials aimed at discrete constituencies)	<i>Identify strategic collaborations to enhance our advocacy role on campus by creating institutional change and capacity-building activities for other departments on campus.</i>	<i>Annual Report on the Status of Women</i>
Fundraising (35 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary campaign; women’s giving circle; grants, especially in math and sciences)	<i>Identify and implement a Fundraising Plan to support the on-going programs and services of the Women’s Center, as well as the strategic initiatives implemented through the strategic plan</i>	<i>Fundraising</i>
Computers/communication (website; on-line services; replacement plan)	<i>Identify strategic collaborations to enhance our advocacy role on campus by creating institutional change and capacity-building activities for other departments on campus.</i>	<i>Strategic Planning; Strategic Marketing; Fundraising</i>
Evaluation of effectiveness (benchmarking; continuous assessment; track success stories; use of CAS standards)	<i>Identify and implement an Assessment Plan to determine the impact of Women’s Center programs and services</i>	<i>Assessment</i>

## **Impact Goals: By 2009**

1. *Identify strategic collaborations to enhance our advocacy role on campus by creating institutional change and capacity-building activities for other departments on campus.*
  - a. *Strategic Planning committee – this committee is charged with developing, implementing, and reviewing the progress of the current strategic plan*
    - i. *Action items*
      1. *Define several concrete areas of expertise at the Center and work to raise the visibility of the Center on campus as an “expert in these areas”, including the VAWPP program, especially in the areas of working with men, and working with traditionally under-served populations.*
      2. *Ensure that considerations of diversity are embedded throughout the goals and objectives of the plan, as well as in the charge to each of the Advisory Board sub-committees.*
      3. *Develop a clear, understandable statement about the strategic vision for the Center and keep it ahead of us.*
      4. *Explore strategies of utilizing technology to support the impact goals*
  - b. *Strategic Marketing committee – this committee is charged with, in conjunction with the staff of the Women’s Center, identifying programs, marketing materials, and collaborations, which have been identified as important to the promotion of equity for women and to the issues of the represented constituencies.*
    - i. *Action items*
      1. *Increase the number of contacts with upper level administrators and faculty to increase opportunities for capacity building in areas outside of the Women’s Center.*
      2. *Actively engage more faculty in the work of the Center*
      3. *Actively engage more alumnae/i, in the work of the Center*
      4. *Identify strategic collaborations with the regional campuses*
      5. *Develop program materials aimed at distinct constituencies, including but not limited to women of color, classified/support staff, women in non-traditional disciplines/fields, and others who may face additional obstacles based on their identity*
      6. *Create opportunities for people to engage in critical conversations around issues of equity, social justice, feminism, and institutionalized racism and sexism*
  - c. *Annual Report on the Status of Women committee – this committee is charged with collecting, analyzing, reviewing and disseminating qualitative and quantitative data to determine the impact on female students, staff, and faculty of issues including, but not limited to: career development, mentoring (personal and professional), demographic balance, pay equity, union issues, and campus resources.*
    - i. *Action items*
      1. *Collaborate with Human Resources and the Institute for Teaching and Learning to develop support for the professional development and upward mobility of female staff and faculty*
      2. *Ensure data collection methods address potential barriers to participation by women of color, lesbian/bisexual women, and other underrepresented groups*
      3. *Ensure that the report includes disaggregated data to reflect the experiences of women of color, lesbian/bisexual women, and other underrepresented groups*

2. *Identify and implement a Fundraising Plan to support the on-going programs and services of the Women's Center, as well as the strategic initiatives implemented through the strategic plan*
  - a. *Fundraising committee – this committee is charged with drafting a 3 – 5 year fundraising plan and overseeing the implementation of fundraising activities*
    - i. *Action items*
      1. *Identify a giving campaign in conjunction with the 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, for priorities, such as funding to support student participation in conferences and leadership development opportunities off campus and the women of color luncheons/awards events*
      2. *Continue to explore the feasibility of establishing a Women's giving circle with the Foundation and the Alumni Association*
      3. *Identify and apply for grants, especially in math and sciences*
3. *Identify and implement an Assessment Plan to determine the impact of Women's Center programs and services*
  - a. *Assessment committee – this committee is charged with, in conjunction with the Strategic Planning Committee, reviewing, enhancing, and establishing assessment strategies and tools for the Women's Center programs and services*
    - i. *Action items*
      1. *Identify potential research projects in collaboration with academic departments*
      2. *Engage stakeholders in the strategic planning process (especially evaluation and goal setting)*
      3. *Identify appropriate benchmarking and continuous assessment activities, including but not limited to tracking success stories and use of CAS standards*
      4. *Identify methods and measures to determine the effectiveness of programs and activities designed to support women of color*

### **Next steps**

1. Review of the proposed plan by the Advisory Board – February Board meeting
2. Finalize the plan and close out the work of the current committees – March/April Board meeting
3. Reorganization of the Advisory board and/or committees
  - a. Strategic Planning Committee - continues
  - b. Strategic Marketing Committee – adapted from the Programming/Political Action Committee
  - c. Annual Report on the Status of Women committee – adapted from the Recruitment and Retention Committee
  - d. Fundraising Committee - new
  - e. Assessment Committee – new
  - f. Women of Color Events Planning Committee – adapted from the Diversity Committee
  - g. Women’s Advance Planning Committee – becomes a sub-committee of the Advisory Board
  - h. 100 Years of Women Scholarship Committee – continues
4. Meet with the new committees – Fall 2007 Board Retreat
5. Develop a timeline with specific tasks in conjunction with the staff and the new committee chairs