

WOMEN'S CENTER ANNUAL REPORT 2003-2004

The mission of the Women's Center is to educate, advocate, 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, but not limited to, women who face additional challenges due to their race, ethnicity, socio-economic class, sexual identity, religion, age, and physical or mental ability. This mission is accomplished through the major components of the Women's Center: Educational Programming/Cultural Events, Advocacy, Support Groups/Services, and the Violence Against Women Prevention Program.

This year we focused on the professional development of both the full-time and student staff. This summer, the full-time staff participated in a variety of team-building activities. The main areas we identified as a group were to increase communication, to balance our work styles so as to maximize our strengths and efficacy, and to explore how institutionalized oppression impacts us individually and collectively. Several initiatives were the result of these activities. We enhanced our staff meetings through collaborative facilitation of the meetings and creating more consistent and effective agendas. We developed clear expectations of each other as a staff and reviewed our job descriptions to eliminate any conflicts when responsibilities overlap. We also began working with Dr. , a faculty member at St. Joseph's College, to work on the issues of team building and working on the impact of oppression in the work environment.

This year we had approximately 25 students on staff that were work-study, student labor, interns, or volunteers. We also served as a field placement site for a graduate student from the School of Social Work. The student staff is a diverse group of mostly undergraduate students representing a variety of majors and semester standing. This year we created learning objectives for the student staff. Over the years, we recognized that one of the most significant impacts of our work could be seen in the growth and development of the students that work at the Center. In order to improve our ability to demonstrate this impact, we have put into place several mechanisms to formalize our intentions and to collect qualitative data about this work with students. We revised the Employee Self-Evaluation to incorporate feedback regarding the students' progress towards these objectives. We also identified required readings and videos on several topics germane to the work of the Center. The overall goal of employment at the Women's Center is to cultivate skills and knowledge that serve to support the academic success and future productivity of students as employees and citizens. Therefore, we have identified the following learning objectives for our student staff.

- 1) Students will develop a better understanding of the role of women in local, national, and international history.
- 2) Students will be able to articulate the herstory of the Women's Center and discuss the Center's role on campus, in the past and currently.
- 3) Students will enhance their knowledge of current events, locally, nationally, and internationally, and be able to discuss the impact of these events on women.
- 4) Students will be able to identify their values, to receive and examine information about values that are different from their own, and to integrate this information into their value system. Ultimately, students will be able to express their point of view and actively demonstrate their commitment to a value system.

- 5) Students will be able to identify strategies for affecting change within the University community, as well as in the broader global community.
- 6) Students will be able to ask questions, analyze arguments, and make connections to enhance their critical thinking skills.
- 7) Students will be able to discuss a variety of forms of oppression and their interconnectedness, so as to understand themselves and others in ways other than stereotyped groups and categories.
- 8) Students will be able to discuss issues surrounding the dynamics of violence against women, eating disorders/body image/media literacy, and reproductive rights.
- 9) Students will develop a professional work ethic, which includes being dependable, conscientious, and responsible for independently completing a project/assignment, and the ability to work with different types of people. Ultimately, the students will leave the Center with the necessary skills to be successful in the workplace upon completion of their academics.
- 10) Students will be able to discuss the connections between the skills learned during their time at the Center and real-life situations they might encounter in future jobs.

In addition, our Advisory Board continued to remain active through their work on the various sub-committees, including Diversity, Recruitment and Retention, Programming, Strategic Planning, and the 100 Years of Women Scholarship. The Board consists of students, staff, and faculty from a variety of disciplines, as well as racial, ethnic, sexual orientation, and gender identities.

- ◆ Diversity – This committee held its fifth luncheon for more than 40 women of color on campus. The fourth annual Women of Color Recognition Reception was held on April 20, 2004. Three women, Bandana Purkayastha, Xaé Alicia Reyes, and Aliza Wilder, received awards for their significant contributions to the University community. The committee also finalized the Resource Guide. It will begin to be distributed to women of color on campus in the Fall 2004 semester.
- ◆ Recruitment and Retention - This committee worked with UITS staff to develop the mentor web site and reviewed the site and recommended revisions and additions throughout the process. The committee also is working with OIR to develop a survey for faculty and staff to collect information about career ladders, professional development opportunities, and leadership opportunities for women.
- ◆ Programming/Political Action – This committee, with the Women’s Studies Program, co-sponsored a film series entitled “One Nation – Multiple Realities” in November and December. The series included the films: *Essential Blue-Eyed*, *Race: The Power of an Illusion* (Episodes 1 – 3) and *The Color of Fear*. Each film was followed by an interactive discussion, which covered white privilege, what supports racism, and concrete ways to challenge racism in our every day lives. These discussions were facilitated by staff from the Women’s Center and Women’s Studies, by undergraduate students, and by a faculty member in Molecular and Cell Biology.
- ◆ Strategic Planning - This year our Advisory Board began the process of strategic planning, as we are at the end of our previous five-year plan. This committee reviewed information about strategic planning, data from Women’s Centers at peer and aspiration institutions, and

organized a focus group with faculty and staff. The graduate student from the School of Social Work provided support to the Strategic Planning committee.

Again this year we held both a staff and an Advisory Board retreat in the Fall. Our student staff met to learn about the herstory of the Center, to discuss issues of gender role stereotyping, to discuss appropriate strategies for crisis management, to play Feminist Jeopardy, and to explore issues of diversity. Our Board met to review the expectations of a board member, to explore the many types of activism, and to discuss the issues surrounding free speech and hostile environments. During the year, our monthly student staff meetings remained an opportunity to spend time at each of the other cultural centers, to discuss current issues on campus, and to participate in professional development activities on topics such as sexual harassment prevention; how language is used to perpetuate sexism, racism, and homophobia; and responding to the conservative backlash.

This year was again a year of accolades for the Women's Center. In October, Valencia Louis, our Professional Development Assistant, was the first recipient of the Elsa Kosgalwies Adomat Nursing Scholarship. Again this April, one of our undergraduate student volunteers received the Sybil Ludington Young Feminist Award from Connecticut NOW. This year's recipient, , was honored for her work re-establishing the chapter of NOW at UConn and organizing a variety of educational events such as the RoseFest and the Student Summit on Corruption. In addition to this award, Maria D. Martinez, Chair of our Advisory Board, received the Prudence Crandall Award for outstanding commitment to and achievement in the field of education.

Also in April, five members of the student staff and of the Violence Against Women Prevention Program (our peer education program) were recognized at the Student Life Awards Ceremony:

- ◆ Anthony DiChiara – Peer Educator of the Year;
- ◆ Kurt Graf - Co-recipient Martha and Albert Cohen Scholarship;
- ◆ Caitlin O'Brien - Co-recipient Martha and Albert Cohen Scholarship;
- ◆ Hilary Jones – Student Multicultural Award;
- ◆ UConn NOW - Student Organization Advocacy Award; and
- ◆ Michelle Noerhen - Spirer/Deuker Student Humanitarian Achievement Award.

In May, Hilary Jones was also recognized at the Women's Studies Graduation Party as the recipient of the Gladys Tantaquidgeon Award.

EDUCATION

This year we saw over 9,000 participants attend the 206 education programs sponsored by the Center. The programs included films, workshops, trainings, lectures, and a variety of cultural events for which the Women's Center was either the primary sponsor or a co-sponsor.

This year we established a theme for our programming: **Reality Feminism**.

The major programs of this year focused on young women of color, reproductive rights, white privilege, beauty and body image, and the future of feminism. Speakers included:

Daisy Hernández and Bushra Rehman, editors of *Colonize This! Young Women of Color on Today's Feminism*, in company with contributor Kahente Horn-Miller;

Peggy McIntosh, Associate Director of the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, and author of "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" and Hugh Vasquez, Co-Director of the Center for Diversity Leadership in Berkeley, CA and participant in the film *The Color of Fear*;

Christy Damio, Mira Jacob, and Elisa Albert, three contributors from the multicultural anthology *Body Outlaws: Rewriting the Rules of Beauty & Body Image*; and

Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, authors of *MANIFESTA: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future*.

In addition to these programs, we continued to offer our annual programs that included:

Brown Bag Lunches – This program was designed to give staff and faculty an opportunity to discuss current topics around issues of balancing work and family life.

Eating Disorders Awareness - In October, we co-sponsored programming in recognition of **Love Your Body Day**, a national day of action to speak out against ads and images of women that are offensive, harmful, dangerous, and disrespectful. In February, we distributed informational pamphlets and other resources during the annual **Eating Disorders Awareness Week**.

Thursday Night at the Movies – This monthly series was established as an attempt to offer students, particularly first year students, an alternative to the typical Thursday night extra-curricular activities. We showed a variety of films, which explored Latinas and body image, the depiction of Asian women in film, three women's search for meaning in their lives, the media image of the female athlete, the 70 year battle for suffrage, and women in the labor movement.

The Vagina Monologues – A collaboration with SUBOG and UConn V-Day. As part of the national V-Day College Campaign, we organized the annual production of this play. In its third year, we held two performances with a total attendance of almost 500 and raised over \$5,000 for local programs that work to end violence against women.

Annual Outstanding Academic Achievement Awards Ceremony – We honored, in collaboration with the Provost's Commission on the Status of Women, the highest-ranking female graduating seniors from each of the University's schools and colleges. We also recognized the three recipients of the 100 Years of Women Scholarship, an incoming first year student, an undergraduate student, and an incoming student at the School of Social Work, who have served as strong role models for young women in their home communities.

Arts/Cultural Events - We worked with Campus Activities and the other cultural centers to hold the fourth **Cultural Explosion**, held during Husky WOW. We again hosted a section of the Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame, in addition to disseminating information about women's issues and events on campus. In the Spring, we co-sponsored the 5th annual **International Women's Day Festival**, along with SUBOG and the other cultural centers. This year a committee of students from the cultural centers organized the day's events. They held a faculty panel discussion on women and globalization during lunch. In spite of a snowstorm later that day, 40 people participated in the evening program, which included performances by Erika Avery, Rubyfruit, and Staceyann Chinn.

Collaborations with Other University Departments – We established a new collaboration with the Celebrate Women Program at the Health Center. We will be co-sponsoring their Fall 2004 annual conference, and adding a professional development opportunity for the female staff and faculty, throughout the University system. This event will replace the 2004 Advance conference, while we use this time to revamp that program. We also worked with the Women's Studies

Program to plan their annual Women and Gender conference, which served as this year's New England Women's Studies Association Conference. Finally, we continued to work with staff from the First Year Programs and Orientation Services, both in Undergraduate Education and Instruction, to incorporate information on diversity, gender, and violence against women issues into the syllabi for the FYE course, as well as the templates on WebCT.

Members of the Women's Center staff continued to speak to a number of classes and on-campus groups on issues of gender roles, sexual harassment, and issues of violence against women. Some examples of this year's engagements include the faculty in the School of Fine Arts, the staff of Dining Services, the RA/CA staff in the Department of Residential Life, TA's in the Departments of History and Modern and Classical Languages, students in the School of Family Studies, and 22 sections of the FYE classes. We also provided sexual harassment prevention workshops to corporate and community organizations, including the Eastern Connecticut Health Network and members of our staff presented at the New England Regional Women's Center Gathering in October and at the *Tomorrow is Determined By the Vision of Today's Youth* Career Fair at Yale University in March.

ADVOCACY

This year the Women's Center continued to focus our on-going advocacy efforts in three major areas: access to childcare; mentoring for staff and faculty; and enhancing the University's response to violence against women on campus. During the Fall, much of our advocacy efforts were directed towards addressing the issue of the Student Union renovations.

Childcare – The Women's Center's staff and Advisory Board members continued to work with UCPEA, AAUP, and AFCSME to follow-up on the Childcare Feasibility Study, which was conducted by Bright Horizons, Inc. This ad hoc coalition, Child Care Now, discussed strategies for keeping this on the University's agenda for facilities and funding priorities. The Provost's Childcare Implementation Committee, working with the Town of Mansfield, surveyed area childcare providers. A report will be available in Summer 2004. Other initiatives include working with the Department of Human Resources to create a child care website; finalizing a demand survey to be distributed to faculty, staff, and students in the Fall of 2004; finalizing a Work/Life Statement; renegotiating the University's contract with Mansfield Discovery Depot; and exploring the possibility of drafting agreements with two other local child care facilities.

Mentoring – The Diversity Committee of our Advisory Board continued to host the annual Women of Color luncheon and the annual Women of Color Recognition event. This committee also created a resource guide for women of color to learn about available on-campus and community-based resources. In addition, the long awaited web-based mentoring site was developed with the assistance of the staff at UITS. This project has been enveloped into the work of the Mentoring Task Force, which was established by the Vice Provost for Multicultural and International Affairs. Therefore, the Recruitment and Retention Committee of our Advisory Board has been working on other priorities including developing a survey to identify issues related to career ladders for women.

Response to Violence Against Women on Campus – We implemented several new initiatives this year, under the auspices of the work on our Department of Justice's *Grant to Reduce Violent Crimes Against Women on Campus*. We received a no-cost extension to continue our work through December of 2004. These initiatives included:

- 1) *Conducting training for Women's Studies faculty to identify and respond more effectively to students' disclosures.* - In collaboration with staff from WeCONNECT, Inc., the local rape

crisis center, we implemented a three-hour curriculum to address identifying sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking, how to make appropriate referrals, and resources available on and off campus. The training, entitled "Effective Identification and Response to Violence Against Women" was conducted this Fall. We offered three training sessions and thirteen faculty and staff members participated. We also offered a session during the Women's Studies/NEWSA conference in April.

- 2) *Implementing the Volunteer Advocate Program.* – This service was created to fill gaps in our ability to provide a 24-hour advocacy response system, as identified by the Community Response Team (CRT). In the Fall, we recruited and trained volunteers from the campus community to participate in a rotating on-call system that will provide assistance to survivors who disclose to a CRT department when a professional staff member is not available, which is usually on nights and weekends. The curriculum for training Volunteer Advocates was completed in collaboration with the Campus Advocate, housed at the local sexual assault crisis service. Fourteen volunteers completed the training, and the service was begun in November 2003. We also established protocols for the other CRT departments to access the service on nights and during the weekends.
- 3) *Collating and reviewing the data collected from focus groups conducted with students from underserved populations both at UConn and at campuses throughout Connecticut.* - The intent is to gather information about the perceptions of and barriers to accessing services and educational activities regarding sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking and to use this information to develop cultural competency trainings for service providers both at UConn and other campuses in the state.
- 4) *Enhancing the Men Against Violence Against Women Program (MAVAW) to include issues of dating violence and stalking.* - We conducted training in the Fall for male peer educators. This group was responsible for organizing the second annual Men's March Against Domestic Violence in October.

We continued to work with the Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc. (CONNSACS) to establish and enhance Community Response Teams on 10 campuses throughout the state. Staff from the Center regularly attended the Connecticut Consortium for the Prevention of Sexual Assault to share information about programs piloted on the UConn campus.

We also worked with the Dean of Students Office to develop training for hearing officers in sexual assault cases. We conducted the first of two three-hour sessions in April in which we explored definitions of sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking; values and biases related to violence against women; the impact on survivors; and offender behavior. We are planning the second session, which will focus on case studies, for this summer. Staff from the Center also met with representatives from other Connecticut campuses and presented at the Connecticut Judicial Affairs Staff consortium. Additionally, we worked as part of the Community Response Team (CRT) to provide services to survivors of sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking. Staff from the Center took the lead on developing guidelines for completing the Incident Report Forms, maintaining the collection of this data, and creating a document that includes information about the protocols for responding to disclosures of violence against women for all CRT departments.

This year we continued to train students as peer educators on issues of sexual assault, dating violence, sexual harassment, and images of women in the media. Students enrolled in Women's Studies 271 and 272, the training mechanism for the Violence Against Women Prevention Program (VAWPP), learned information on issues of violence against women, facilitation skills,

and working with participants from diverse communities. In addition to conducting sessions in the residence halls, 22 FYE classes, and local high schools, these students also facilitated a mandatory session for all incoming first year students during Summer Orientation. VAWPP also sponsored, in conjunction with several departments across campus, educational programs recognizing Domestic Violence Awareness Month and Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Approximately 4,500 participants attended the 130 educational sessions and awareness events sponsored by VAWPP this year.

SUPPORT GROUPS AND SERVICES

Support services at the Women's Center consist of:

- *Crisis intervention* - short-term individual counseling to anyone experiencing issues related to sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship violence, or discrimination. Advocacy services may be a result of crisis counseling.
- *Information and referrals* - the Center maintains a database of legal, medical, counseling, childcare, and other social service and feminist resources. The database consists mostly of providers from Northeast Connecticut, however services throughout Connecticut are also included.
- *Discussion/support groups* - these groups vary every semester. Some function as support groups, psycho-educational groups, or discussion groups. This year we continued to provide the Sexual Assault Survivors' Group, the Women's Book Club, and Between Women. We also served as a host site for an informal "Mommy and Baby" group, which was organized by a UConn alum and several other women in the area.

OUTREACH

The following are some of the new outreach activities conducted by staff, which are not included in our service or program attendance statistics:

- ♦ Co-hosted, with Women's Studies, the meeting of the Congressional District 2 Advisory Council of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women;
- ♦ Staffed a table at the Employee Benefits Fair;
- ♦ Staffed a table at the International Nite 2003; and
- ♦ Staffed a table at the Celebrate Women Annual Conference.

The following are annual outreach activities conducted by staff, which are not included in our service or program attendance statistics:

- ♦ Staffed a booth at the Admissions Open House Resource Fairs;
- ♦ Staffed a table at the Human Services Fair;
- ♦ Staffed a table at all of the sessions during the Parent Orientation and Transfer Student Resource Fairs;

- ◆ Staffed a table at the Graduate Student Resource Fair;
- ◆ Staffed a table at the Student Job Fair; and
- ◆ Staffed a table at the Student Health Fair.

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