

2006-2007 Annual Report of the Senate Committee on Women's Concerns

7 November 2007

There shall be a Committee on Women's Concerns which shall focus on the development, oversight, and monitoring of the many issues at Syracuse University which are central to the climate for women faculty members, administrators, staff members, and students. In particular, but not exclusively, the committee will concern itself with issues of curriculum, pay equity, affirmative action, sexual harassment, climate and advancement of women [Faculty Senate Bylaws, Section 20]

The Senate Committee on Women's Concerns focused its 2006-2007 activities on the following:

1. Continued monitoring of the University's *Staff Complaint Process*

Background:

Item 11 Appendix I *Definitions of Roles and Operating Guidelines* of the University's *Staff Complaint Process* (effective January 1, 2003) states, "Develop and maintain a record system that tracks all inquiries regarding the *Staff Complaint Process*, all complaints, including the final disposition of complaints as well as progress in the implementation of decisions reached. The Coordinator will submit an annual utilization report to the Senate Committee on Services to Faculty and Staff."

To date, there has not been a routine format or schedule established for the required annual utilization report.

2006-07 activity:

In November 2006, the Committee made its annual inquiry to HR about this report, asking:

- "Is there an updated report on the utilization of the Staff Grievance Process?"
- Has a log of inquiries been maintained?
- Has there been any progress with the idea of following up with those who made an inquiry, but did not end up utilizing the Process?

Committee members were in agreement that HR replies to these inquiries via email, and a supplied report, did not sufficiently answer our questions.

2. Investigating the need for/feasibility of establishing a women's center at Syracuse University

Background:

This activity builds on the May 2004 *Proposal for the creation of the Office of Women's Affairs/Issues at Syracuse University* drafted by the Executive Committee of the Women's Studies Advisory Board. On September 29, 2004, the Senate Committee on Women's Concerns submitted an enthusiastic *Letter of Support for Proposal for Office of Women's Affairs* to Chancellor Nancy Cantor, with copies to Deborah Freund, Vice Chancellor and Cathryn Newton, Dean of Arts and Sciences. Due to a variety of factors, the Committee set aside this initiative during the 2005/2006 academic year, and returned to it during the 2006-2007 academic year.

2006-2007 activity:

- Committee members reviewed a variety of women's centers in place at various academic institutions, and found certain commonalities, including some degree of counseling and opportunities for informal gathering. Questions raised by Committee members included:
 - To what extent is this an in-house (on-campus) center or a more extensive Syracuse community center?
 - What are the concerns of women to which we are responding?

To answer these questions, Committee members decided to survey faculty, staff, and students to help identify initiatives that could improve the working climate for women at Syracuse University. Committee members would use the survey results to validate the need for a women's center at Syracuse University and to define its structure and goals.

In December 2006, Committee members met with Bobbi Yonai, Director, Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) about developing the survey. Spring 2007 Committee meetings focused on discussions about the timing, type, and goal of the survey—i.e., what does the Committee want to find out?

2007-08 Agenda Items for the Senate Committee on Women’s Concerns

For the 2007-2008 academic years, Committee members will focus on:

- Continue monitoring the progress of the University’s *Staff Complaint Process*, and meet with relevant HR staff to:
 - Clarify/determine the elements of the annual utilization report
 - Establish a routine schedule for the annual reporting process
 - Identify any issues concerning and/or affecting the complaint process itself
 - Initiate a process and timeline for revising the *Staff Complaint Process* document, as necessary

- Submit to the Senate a proposal for improving the working climate for women at Syracuse University
The proposal will be informed by results from a survey of faculty, staff, and students, conducted by OIRA, that will help determine the need for a women’s center at Syracuse University. If so determined, the proposal will define the structure and goals of the proposed women’s center.

Respectfully submitted,

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