

Syracuse University
Senate Committee on Women's Concerns
2008-2009 Annual Report
February 17, 2010

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]

Primary focus in 2008-09

The primary focus of the Senate Committee on Women's Concerns in 2008-2009 was to complete, analyze, and articulate the findings of two campus surveys designed to investigate whether a women's center could enhance the experience of members of the Syracuse University community.

Background

This investigation builds from 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. In this letter, submitted to Chancellor Cantor, the Executive Committee proposed "that the university create an Office of Women's Affairs, which would serve as an advocacy office for all women, including faculty, staff, and students." At that time, Women's Concerns Committee members submitted an enthusiastic *Letter of Support for Proposal for Office of Women's Affairs* to Chancellor Nancy Cantor on September 29, 2004. Due to the convergence of a variety of factors, it was not until 2007 that the Committee re-visited the 2004 proposal and chose to gauge campus interest in creating a women's center at Syracuse University by surveying faculty, staff, and students.

Committee process and timeline

During 2007-2009, the Committee collaborated with the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment to develop two surveys:

- *Survey for a Potential SU Women's Center*, distributed Spring 2008 to SU faculty and staff
- *Survey for a Potential SU Women's Center*, distributed Spring 2009 to SU undergraduate and graduate students

The Committee would like to take this opportunity to thank Bobbi Yonai, Director, Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) and Laura Harrington, Research Associate, OIRA for their generous support in preparing, developing, implementing, and assessing a survey of Syracuse University faculty, staff, and students!

During Fall 2007, Committee members

- Reviewed the missions, organization, services, programs, and other aspects of approximately 70 established women's centers drawn primarily from the *Women's Centers & offices at American Colleges & Universities* http://www.uic.edu/depts/owa/womens_centers.html
- Selected 14 well-established centers¹ (essentially based on dates established, which ranged from 1973-1997) for additional information gathering
- Contacted the directors of each of the 14 women's centers, and asked the following questions:
 - Who tends to use the Center? (Faculty? Staff? Students?)
 - What do they use the Center for? (Information? A gathering place? Counseling? Attending

¹ California Institute of Technology, Emory, Indiana, Kent State, Montana State, Murray State, North Carolina State, Northwestern, University of Connecticut, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Virginia, and Virginia Tech.

- programs offered? Other?)
- What is your sense of how frequently people use the Center?
- What impact has the Center had for women on campus?
- What kind of support does the institution provide for the Center?
- Collaborated with OIRA to design and launch the *Survey on a Potential SU Women's Center* for faculty and staff. Specifically, the Committee sought input in the following areas:
 - Familiarity with and use of campus resources and services
 - Importance of various topic areas to respondents and SU's effectiveness in providing resources in these areas
 - Impressions of the campus climate and respondents' place in the SU community
 - Importance of and support for a university women's center

During Spring 2008, committee members (in collaboration with OIRA)

- Developed faculty/staff survey questions
 - The Committee debated whether or not to send the surveys to females only, and decided to include all genders (female, male, transgender) within the University community
- Launched the *Survey for a Potential SU Women's Center* to SU faculty and staff on April 21, 2008
- OIRA e-mailed the online survey to 3,189 faculty and staff, and also mailed (via campus mail) paper surveys to all food services, custodial, and physical plant bargaining unit staff (approximately 700 people)

During Fall 2008, committee members (in collaboration with OIRA)

- Received a summary report of the faculty/staff survey from OIRA on October 7, 2008, which included 156 pages of open-ended responses, which subsequently OIRA organized into themes for ease of review
- Developed student survey questions

During Spring 2009, committee members (in collaboration with OIRA)

- Identified and met with student volunteers to pilot the student survey
- Launched the student *Survey for a Potential SU Women's Center* on January 28, 2009
- OIRA emailed the online survey to 4,500 undergraduate and graduate students on January 28, 2009
- Received a summary report of the student survey from OIRA on April 10, 2009

Summary of survey questionnaire

Faculty staff survey (see Appendix A for survey template)

The faculty/staff survey contained 17 questions, organized in the following six major categories:

1. Familiarity with/use of/difficulties in using 15 campus offices and resources (Questions 1-2)
2. Importance of 16 personal/professional topic areas and SU's effectiveness in providing resources and support in these areas (Questions 3 -4)
3. Open-ended request for information about other services or resources the respondent feels is missing from SU or need improvement (Question 5)
4. How the respondent feels (scale of 1-5) about (Question 6):
 - a. The overall campus climate
(unaccepting, exclusive, unwelcoming => accepting, inclusive, welcoming)
 - b. Her/himself as a member of the SU community
(feeling of alienation, isolation with the SU community => feeling of belonging, part of the SU Community)

5. Level of importance of women's center services and resource for SU and what degree the respondent might use/support the creation of a women's center at SU (Questions 7-10)
6. Demographic information (Questions 11-17)

Student survey (see Appendix B for survey template)

The Committee adjusted some aspects of the student survey, based on results of the faculty/staff survey, including

- Re-arranging the categories of question to begin (rather than end) with demographic information
- Including a new two-part question (Question 17) that asked respondents to envision 1) what gender(s) they thought would use a women's center and 2) what groups (students, faculty, and or staff/administrators) they thought would use a women's center
- Over-sampling male students, because of disparities in gender response rates from the faculty /staff survey (1,500 surveys sent to females/ 3,000 sent to males)

The student survey contained 22 questions, organized in the following six major categories:

1. Demographic information (Questions 1-5)
2. Familiarity with/use of/difficulties in using 24 campus offices and resources (Questions 6-8)
3. Importance of 18 personal topic areas and SU's effectiveness in providing resources and support in these areas (Questions 9-12)
4. Open-ended request for information about other services or resources the respondent feels is missing from SU or need improvement (Question 13)
5. How the respondent feels (scale of 1-5) about (Question 14-15):
 - a. About the overall campus climate
(unaccepting, exclusive, unwelcoming => accepting, inclusive, welcoming)
 - b. Her/himself as a member of the SU community
Feeling of alienation, isolation with the SU community => feeling of belonging, part of the SU community
6. Level of importance of women's center services and resource for SU and what degree the respondent might use/support the creation of a women's center at SU (Questions 16-22)

Preliminary Survey Findings

For the purposes of this report, the summary of findings focuses on the sixth category of each survey—the level of importance of women's center services and resources for SU and what degree respondents might use/support the creation of a women's center at SU. The other five categories provide valuable information about University services, resources, and overall campus climate. The Committee is still in the process of reviewing the potential wealth of quantitative and qualitative information provided by those who responded to the surveys' questions. Upon completion of analysis, the Committee would like to share its findings with relevant University committees, departments, and other venues.

Unfortunately, response rates for the faculty/staff and student surveys were too low for the Committee to clearly state, "People want to create a women's center at Syracuse University." The response rate for completed faculty/staff surveys was 22% of the 3,189 sample, and the student survey response rate was 15% of the 4,500 sample. As a result, OIRA cautioned the Committee against generalizing data results to the greater campus population, due to these relatively low response rates for both surveys. However, the data gathered are still valuable and can be informative (particularly the qualitative information gathered by the open-ended comments), but needs to be used with caution.

Summary of Faculty/Staff Survey Findings

All faculty, librarians, bargaining unit employees were included in the sample to ensure adequate numbers in the subgroup analysis (the groups tend to have a low response rates). Exempt and non-exempt employees were sampled @ 25% and 67% respectively, to arrive at roughly 500 sampled for each group. Overall, 706 respondents completed the survey (22% of the total survey sample) and 803 respondents started, but did not complete, the survey (25% of the total).

Breakdown of Faculty/Staff Respondents (based on OIRA 09/08 summary report)

| Respondent Group | # Possible Respondents | # Actual Respondents | Response Rate |
|------------------|------------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| Faculty | 803 | 271 | 34% |
| Librarian | 803 | 29 | 4% |
| Bargaining Unit | 803 | 63 | 8% |
| Exempt staff | 803 | 171 | 21% |
| Non-exempt staff | 803 | 145 | 18% |
| Other | 803 | 23 | 3% |
| Missing | 803 | 96 | 12% |
| Female | 803 | 510 | 64% |
| Male | 803 | 190 | 24% |
| Missing | 803 | 103 | 13% |

Gender includes: Female, Male, Transgender, and Missing (respondent did not identify gender)

Employment category includes: Faculty, Librarian, Bargaining Unit, Non-exempt, Exempt, Other, and Missing (Respondent did not identify employment category)

Level of importance of women's center services and resource for SU and what degree respondents might use/support the creation of a women's center at SU (Questions 7-10)

Question 7: The next item lists a number of services and resources that are often associated with women's centers at other universities. How important is it that the following are available to women in the SU community?

Summary of Responses to Question 7 (based on OIRA 09/08 summary report)

| Services/Resources—Very important or important | % Female | % Male |
|---|----------|--------|
| Advocacy around the resolution of grievances and complaints concerning disparate treatment, harassment, or threats to personal safety on campus (85%) | 86% | 80% |
| Advocacy for initiatives, issues, and policies affecting women | 84% | 65% |
| A central place for information on SU services and resources and assistance in connecting to them | 81% | 67% |
| Individual support services (e.g., crisis intervention, counseling, information And referrals | 78% | 71% |
| A safe place (e.g., psychological, physical, emotional) | 75% | 73% |
| Educational programming on a variety of topics of interest to women (e.g., workshops, presentations) | 80% | 57% |
| Mentoring support | 75% | 69% |
| Networking support | 73% | 60% |
| A hub for women's organizations on campus | 65% | 54% |

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| A spokesperson for women on campus making public statements about women's concerns | 66% | 45% |
| Resource center providing information (e.g., books, journals) on a variety of women's issues | 61% | 51% |
| A central meeting place where women can connect | 55% | 52% |

Question 8: *How likely would you be to use an on-campus women's center, if campus services and resources were consolidated in one place?*

| Response | Female | Male |
|-------------------|--------|------|
| Very likely | 28% | 3% |
| Somewhat likely | 48% | 13% |
| Not too likely | 14% | 23% |
| Not at all likely | 10% | 61% |

(based on OIRA 09/08 summary report)

Question 9: *How likely would you be to use an off-campus women's center, if campus services and resources were consolidated in one place?*

| Response | Female | Male |
|-------------------|--------|------|
| Very likely | 11% | 1% |
| Somewhat likely | 34% | 8% |
| Not too likely | 34% | 28% |
| Not at all likely | 21% | 63% |

(based on OIRA 09/08 summary report)

Question 10: *Do you favor the creation of a women's center at SU?*

| Response | Female | Male |
|----------|--------|------|
| Yes | 60% | 47% |
| Unsure | 30% | 32% |
| No | 10% | 21% |

(based on OIRA 09/08 summary report)

Summary of student survey responses

The student survey was distributed to 4,500 undergraduate and graduate students. Adjustments made to the student survey, based on results of the faculty/staff survey, included:

Breakdown of Student Respondents
(based on OIRA 04/09 summary report)

| Respondent Group | # Possible Respondents | # Actual Respondents | Response Rate |
|------------------|------------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| Female | 684 | 289 | 44% |
| Male | 684 | 365 | 56% |
| Transgender | 684 | 3 | .5% |
| Missing | | 27 | |

Level of importance of women's center services and resource for SU and what degree respondents might use/support the creation of a women's center at SU_(Questions 16-22)

Question 16: *What's your idea of a women's center? The next item lists a number of services and resources that are often associated with women's centers at other universities. How important is it that the following are available to women in the SU community?*

Summary of Responses to Question 16
(based on OIRA 04/09 summary report)

| Services/Resources—Very important or important | % Female | % Male |
|---|-----------------|---------------|
| A safe place (e.g., psychological, physical, emotional) | 84% | 75% |
| Advocacy around the resolution of grievances and complaints concerning disparate treatment, harassment, or threats to personal safety on campus | 82% | 74% |
| Individual support services (e.g., crisis intervention, counseling, information and referrals) | 81% | 71% |
| Networking support | 82% | 61% |
| Advocacy for initiatives, issues, and policies affecting women | 80% | 65% |
| Mentoring support | 79% | 61% |
| A central place for information on SU services and resources and assistance in connecting to them | 78% | 63% |
| Educational programming on a variety of topics of interest to women (e.g., workshops, presentations) | 76% | 53% |
| A spokesperson for women on campus making public statements about women's concerns | 68% | 56% |
| A hub for women's organizations on campus | 72% | 52% |
| Resource center providing information (e.g., books, journals) on a variety of women's issues | 71% | 49% |
| A central meeting place where women can connect | 66% | 52% |

Question 17: *Do you envision a potential women's center as a place for campus community members of all gender identities, campus community members or organizations focused on women's concerns, or women only*

| Women's center as place for: | Female | Male |
|---|---------------|-------------|
| Campus community members of all gender identities | 38% | 39% |
| Campus community members or organizations focused on women's concerns | 48% | 33% |
| Women only | 14% | 27% |

(based on OIRA 04/09 summary report)

Question 18: *Do you envision a potential women's center as a place for and students, faculty, and staff/administrators; students only; faculty and staff/administrators only, or other*

| Women's center as place for: | Female | Male |
|---|---------------|-------------|
| Students, faculty, and staff/administrators | 87% | 78% |
| Students only | 11% | 18% |
| Faculty and staff/administrators only | 0% | 1% |
| Other | 1% | 2% |

(based on OIRA 04/09 summary report)

Question 18: *How likely would you be to use a women's center?*

| Likely use of a women's center | Female | Male |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Very likely | 18% | 5% |
| Somewhat likely | 46% | 15% |

| | | |
|-------------------|-----|-----|
| Not too likely | 23% | 33% |
| Not at all likely | 13% | 48% |

(based on OIRA 04/09 summary report)

Question 19 a: *If you are likely to use a women's center, when would you be most likely to use it?*

| Likely times to use a women's center (choose all that apply) | # "likely use" responses | % Female | % Male |
|--|--------------------------|----------|--------|
| Weekday mornings | 41 | 27% | 6% |
| Weekday afternoons | 97 | 63% | 17% |
| Weekday evenings | 94 | 55% | 40% |
| Weekend mornings | 33 | 19% | 15% |
| Weekend afternoons | 80 | 41% | 49% |
| Weekend evening s | 36 | 19% | 23% |

(based on OIRA 04/09 summary report)

Question 19 b: *If you are likely to use a women's center, what ideas do you have for activities/programming?*

The Committee received 49 responses that included such suggestions as networking opportunities, movie nights, lectures, fitness classes, book clubs, and educational workshops/programs covering various topics. Respondents noted that activities should be open to the entire community in order to attract a diverse group of participants. However, some activities, a women only gym for example, would be limited to female participants.

Question 20: *If you are not likely to use a women's center, please explain the reason(s) for your response*

Most often, respondents reported that they were male and a women's center would not be meant for their use. Female and male respondents alike commented that they did not understand the purpose a women's center would serve on campus. Some of these responders did not see how a center would fulfill their needs any better than the services and resources currently available on campus.

Question 21: *Do you think SU should create a women's center?*

| Do you think SU should create a women's center? | Female | Male |
|---|--------|------|
| Yes | 59% | 43% |
| No | 9% | 26% |
| Unsure | 32% | 31% |

(based on OIRA 04/09 summary report)

Question 22: *Is there anything else you think would be helpful for us to know about creating a women's center at SU?*

Respondents provided general suggestions that they thought would be helpful in creating a women's center. Many comments focused on the need for a potential center to be inclusive and welcoming to the entire community; specifically to all genders. Some respondents questioned if a women's center was a priority financially and if funds could be better directed, for example, lowering the cost of attendance. The duplication of current services was a concern, and some suggested coordinating with current campus resources when designing a potential center.

Respectfully submitted,

Marina Artuso and Martha Hanson (co-chairs)

