

Syracuse University
Senate Committee on Women's Concerns
2009-2010 Annual Report
Presented to the Syracuse University Senate December 8, 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]

New areas of attention in 2009/2010

1. Benefits changes and enhancements

The initiative by University leaders during fall 2009/early spring 2010 to develop a set of benefits changes and enhancements offered opportunities for Committee members to participate in this important effort:

- During Fall 2009/early spring 2010, a member of the Committee served on the campus-wide *Working Group on Sustainable Benefits*. The purpose of the Working Group was to provide input and consultation to help University leaders in their efforts to develop a proposal
- On 01/17/2010, the Senate Agenda Committee chair invited Women's Concerns, as well as the Senate Committees on Budget, Diversity, Services to Faculty and Staff, to discuss the *Syracuse University Report on Sustainable Benefits* (distributed by the Chancellor on 01/22/2010) to the campus community and provide feedback by various venues:
 - Committee members met with Vice-Chancellor/Provost Eric Spina and Senior Associate Provost Kal Alston (02/16/2010) to discuss a variety of questions prepared by Committee members
 - On 03/03/2010, the Committee presented a report at the Special Senate meeting that voiced members' questions/comments/concerns/suggestions about the *Report on Sustainable Benefits*

2. Dependent care issues

- a. During 2009/10, the Committee became more attentive to dependent care issues as members began to review the 1,100 open-ended comments included in the Committee's 2008 faculty/staff *Survey for a Potential SU Women's Center* (members have not yet reviewed the open-ended comments from the 2008 student survey). While the overall faculty/staff survey response rate of 22% was low (as noted in the Committee's 2008/09 report), the data gathered is still valuable and can be informative—particularly the qualitative information gathered by the survey's open-ended comments.

Of the six survey questions offering open-ended questions, three (Questions 3, 5, and 6) contained comments about dependent care. These three questions contained a total of 627 comments, with 32 related to dependent care. Perhaps most striking is that 63% of these dependent care related comments were made by female faculty, including this poignant cry for the University's help:

"...Our attention is on our families and children. Help us provide in that arena in a concrete fashion and we will be freed to pursue our professional goals and aspirations without the crush of daily concerns about child care (snow day, vacation, sick day) the various array of middle-aged pressures. (We take care of everyone else, no one takes care of us.) Help facilitate the care of our children and dying/decaying parents, and we can have the time and energy to attend to our passionate academic interests."

Summary of Questions 3, 5, and 6:

- Question 3: *How important is each of the following topic areas to you personally?* (included a list of 16 topic areas. The open-ended question in this section asked: *What other topic areas are important to you?* Of the 161 total comments, 7 concerned childcare and 71% of these comments were by female faculty.

- Question 5: *What other services or resources do you feel are missing from SU or need improvement? Please include suggestions for how your needs can best be met in the areas you identify.* Of the 189 total comments, 23 concerned childcare and 57% of these comments were by female faculty
- Question 6: *Select the number that best represents how you currently view the following:*
 - *Overall campus climate* (1 2 3 4 5: 1 = unaccepting, exclusive, unwelcoming and 5 = accepting, inclusive, welcoming)
 - *Yourself – as a member of the SU community* (1 2 3 4 5: 1= feeling of alienation, isolated within the SU community and 5 = feeling of belonging, part of the SU community)

The open-ended question in this section asked: *Please provide comments to help us better understand your responses to the above items.* Of the 278 total comments, 2 concerned childcare—both by female faculty members.

It is clear to the Women’s Concerns Committee that the University must provide better family support services so that:

- Our faculty can accomplish the substantial level of research and teaching required by Syracuse University
- Our staff can carry out the substantial level of support services required by Syracuse University

b. Creation of the *Dependent Care Task Force*

The creation in summer 2010 of the *Dependent Care Task Force* is an important initiative that may begin to respond to cries for help from our faculty and staff. A Committee member serves on this crucial Task Force, which was created in response to the “create a new child care initiative” recommendation included in the *Chancellor’s Report on Sustainable Benefits*. The Task Force has since broadened its scope to include child and other dependent care.

c. Transfer of SU’s Early Education and Child Care Center

On 03/10/2010, the Senate Agenda Committee chair contacted Women’s Concerns and Services to Faculty and Staff—the two Senate committees that have a particular interest in childcare services on campus—abreast of the upcoming transfer of SU’s Early Education and Child Care Center from the Division of Student Affairs to the College of Human Ecology.

The Agenda chair indicated that these two committees have an investment in knowing about the conversation at play and suggested that individuals invested in this transition would be willing to talk to the Committee at any point for more information, as needed. To date, Committee members have met with some of the individuals involved.

Continued area of attention in 2009/2010

2008 Potential SU Women’s Center surveys

- Members continued to review the hundreds of open-ended comments) contained in the 2008 faculty/staff and student surveys concerning a potential women’s center at Syracuse University