

**Syracuse University Senate Committee on Women's Concerns  
2011-2012 Annual Report  
Presented to the Syracuse University Senate February 13, 2013**

*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]

**Focus of activities in 2011/12**

A. Prepared a statement on sexual abuse for endorsement by the University Senate

At the 12/07/2011 meeting of the University Senate, Women's Concerns co-chair Lori Brown read a statement on behalf of the committee entitled *Women's Concerns Committee of the University Senate Statement on Sexual Abuse and our Community*. We prepared this statement (supported by the Senate Committee on Athletic Policy), in response to the fast-breaking Fall 2012 Bernie Fine sexual abuse scandal. Our statement called for opening up a dialogue with Syracuse community members about addressing sexual abuse and asked that the University:

1. Acknowledge the impact of the sexual abuse allegations on the entire university community
2. Distribute information on how to talk about, prevent, and address sexual abuse and suggest resources on campus available to assist supervisors, managers, Deans, Department Chairs and Program Directors in preparing for these conversations and encourage these conversations to take place
3. Commit to creating itself as a "community of empowered bystanders"—individuals who:
  - If witness to potentially harmful behavior, take action that has the potential to lead to a positive outcome
  - Speak up about abusive behavior and/or support individuals who have been abused
  - Realize the opportunities, options, and impact they can have in preventing sexual assault, bullying, and other bias related behaviors
  - Become "empowered" as the result of reflecting upon our University's values and options, and taking action when necessary—collectively ensuring that Syracuse University remains a safe place for every campus community member

The University Senate endorsed the statement.

B. Initiated a community dialogue about addressing and preventing sexual abuse

In the spirit of the endorsement by the University Senate on 12/7/2011 of the *Women's Concerns Committee of the University Senate Statement on Sexual Abuse and our Community*, we collaborated with Dean of Hendricks Chapel Tiffany Steinwert and Janet Epstein, Director of the Advocacy Center of Syracuse University, to organize a panel discussion, facilitated by Senior Vice President and Dean of Student Affairs, Thomas Wolfe, entitled *A Community Conversation on Sexual Abuse* on February 7, 2012 at Hendricks Chapel.

Panelists from the Syracuse community included Julie Cecile, executive director of the McMahon/Ryan Child Advocacy Center; Ellen Ford, clinical director at Vera House; Bryan Lendy, detective and sergeant with the Syracuse Police Department's Abused Persons Unit; David Hubert, an adult survivor of child sexual abuse; and Allison Young, director of Sexual Abuse Services and Family Transition Services at Elmcrest Children's Center. Young also provides treatment to adult sexual offenders with NuSTep

Professional Counseling Services. Panelists from the SU community included Janet Epstein; Sarah Ann “Sam” Myers, a junior at SU and Advocacy Center volunteer; and Eric McGriff, a first-year student at SU and Advocacy Center volunteer.

In addition, representatives from various offices on campus, including the Faculty and Staff Assistance Program, Counseling Center, Office of Student Assistance, Department of Public Safety, Goldberg Marriage and Family Therapy Center and the Advocacy Center were available to respond to questions about campus resources and response. Following the panel discussion, attendees were encouraged to ask questions of the panelists and to engage in discussion about the topics addressed.

C. Received an update on progress of Syracuse University Staff Complaint Process

On 12/14/2011, we met with Kal Alston, Senior Vice President for Human Capital Development, who presented an update on the University’s *Staff Complaint Process*. She shared with the committee changes made to the original January 2003 document, the majority of which are editorial in nature, and provided a summary of the number of employees who have accessed the *Staff Complaint Process* since 2003:

Kal provided a summary since 2003 of the number of employees who accessed *Staff Complaint Process*:

- Two employees (in 2003) accessed the informal mediation process
- Eight employees accessed the formal procedure (in 2003, 2006, 2008, 2011)
- Two employees (in 2003) and 1 employee (in 2008) accessed the appeals procedure.

Kal also shared with the committee changes made to the original January 2003 document, the majority of which are editorial in nature.

The revised *Staff Complaint Process*, launched in January 2003, was jointly developed by the Services to Faculty and Staff and Women’s Concerns committees. The Women’s Concerns Committee continues to have great interest and energy in how this crucial process has been working—its use by employees, what issues/concerns there may be about this process, etc. One of our concerns about this process over the past several years relates to an inferred oversight role vested in the Senate Committee on Services to Faculty and Staff, included below as one of several responsibilities of the Staff Complaint Coordinator (see underlined below):

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. (Appendix I Definitions of Roles and Operating Guidelines of the Staff Complaint Process, Staff Complaint Coordinator, no. 11.

We understand that the Senate Agenda Committee has been in the process of reviewing the Services to Faculty and Staff Committee with the goal of reconstituting and reinvigorating it. The Senate Committee on Women’s Concerns hopes that the Agenda Committee can reconstitute the Services to Faculty and Staff Committee soon so that it can continue to carry out its important Senate oversight role for the University’s *Staff Complaint Process*.

D. Followed up on residual concerns and issues from the transition of the Early Education and Child Care Center (EECCC) with the Falk College of Sport and Human Dynamics:

1. As a follow up to the summer 2010 merger with the Falk College of Sport and Human Dynamics, the co-chairs met with Chancellor Cantor 12/13/2011 to talk about the future of child care at Syracuse University. Topics covered included a discussion about the committee’s residual concerns and issues about the EECCC/Falk transition process, as well as how to move forward successfully on planning for the future of child care at Syracuse University. Concerning the latter, the co-chairs urged the

Chancellor to expedite the formation of the EECCC *Parents Advisory Group* proposed as part of the EECCC/Falk College transition and the campus-wide *Childcare Committee/Task Force* called for in the University's *Dependent Care Task Force* (2010-2011) report submitted in May 2011. In addition, the co-chairs proposed that the University hold a series of on-campus public town meetings about the future of child care at Syracuse University. These town meetings would provide the University faculty, staff, and students with the opportunity to respond to initiatives in place so far, future initiatives planned, and to air their suggestions, concerns, etc. about the future of child care at Syracuse University.

Outcomes of the conversation included the Chancellor readily agreeing to expedite the process of forming the EECCC *Parents Advisory Group* and the *Child Care Advisory Board*—the former established in early Fall 2011 and the latter in late Fall 2012. In addition, the Chancellor welcomed the idea of holding open forums about the future of child care on campus—but felt that it was too soon at that time to move ahead on that initiative. The Chancellor also encouraged the co-chairs to meet with her in the future about child care or other issues of concern that the Committee might have.

➤ Recommendation:

As the University moves forward to attend to child care and other issues of significance on campus, the Committee on Women's Concerns recommends that thoughtful conversations within the main academic governing body of our University—the University Senate—take place and become an ongoing part of the University's planning process.

### **Other activities in 2011/12**

In addition to the three primary areas of activity noted above the Women's Concerns Committee:

- A. Urged the creation of an ad hoc committee focused on non-faculty sexual harassment and misconduct  
In Sept. 2011, committee co-chairs contacted the chair of the Senate Agenda Committee urging the creation of an ad hoc committee, similar to that of the *Ad Hoc Committee on Sexual Harassment and Faculty Misconduct*, that focuses on the University's non-faculty employees. Since the majority of employees at Syracuse University are non-faculty employees, the Women's Concerns Committee feels strongly that such a committee be constituted and hopes that the Agenda Committee will consider and act on this suggestion.
  
- B. Began developing a proposal to establish an ombuds program on campus  
During past years, the Women's Concerns Committee has had on-and-off conversations about developing a proposal to establish an ombuds program on campus. One catalyst for pursuing such a program now is the increased frequency with which the committee has been approached as a "safe space" over the past few years by employees (faculty and staff) to talk about issues of grave concern. Committee members have listened to our troubled colleagues and carefully suggested possible avenues, as appropriate, for resolving certain concerns. But, the committee believes that a campus-wide ombuds program would be a far more appropriate and effective venue for hearing and acting on faculty and staff concerns. In fact, this idea is not new to the University—during the late 1999/2000 the Maxwell School instituted a short-lived *Ombuds Program* that "fizzled out", as one former member described it, due primarily to lack of promotion and support from key individuals on campus.

In 2011/12, the committee undertook preliminary research on ombuds programs, and among its early findings discovered that *The International Ombudsman Association* (IOA)—the primary professional association—includes a list on its website of more than 300 colleges and universities with established ombuds programs. According to the IOA, ombudsmen work in all types of organizations, including

government agencies, colleges and universities, corporations, hospitals and other medical facilities, and news organizations. (From IOA website: <http://www.ombudsassociation.org/resources/what-ombuds>. Accessed 04/10/12)<sup>1</sup>

In general, responsibilities of an ombuds program include:

- Working with individuals and groups in an organization to explore and assist them in determining options to help resolve conflicts, problematic issues or concerns
- Bringing systemic concerns to the attention of the organization for resolution
- Operating in a manner to preserve the confidentiality of those seeking services
- Maintaining a neutral/impartial position with respect to the concerns raised
- Working at an informal level of the organizational system, and is independent of formal organizational structures
- Conducting work in a manner consistent with the IOA *Standards of Practice*

The committee expects to complete its proposal for establishing an ombuds program at Syracuse University by the beginning of the Fall 2013 academic year.

Respectfully submitted (on behalf of the Women's Concerns Committee):

Lori Brown and Marty Hanson, co-chairs

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<sup>1</sup> The term "ombudsman" comes from Swedish and literally means "representative." At the most fundamental level, an ombudsman is one who assists individuals and groups in the resolution of conflicts or concerns.