

## MEMORANDUM

To: Chancellor Julius Erlenbach

From: Standing Committee on Women's Issues

Date: December 19, 2000

Re: Progress Report on the Status of Women at UW-Superior

Attached is our Progress Report on the Status of Women at UW-Superior. This report summarizes how UW-Superior has addressed women's issues since the Fall semester of 1998. The following specific activities are discussed:

- 1) focus group research on the status of women
- 2) a Report on the Status of Women on our campus
- 3) the creation of our committee (then the Committee on the Status of Women; now the Standing Committee on Women's Issues)
- 4) the creation of new position (Coordinator of Women's and Gender Issues)
- 5) the hiring of a Coordinator (Dianna Hunter)
- 6) activities of the Coordinator and the Committee

In addition, we've attached rough drafts of goals and objectives currently being developed by the Committee. These drafts are works in progress. They have not yet been classified, evaluated, weighted, or prioritized, but they do reflect current women's and gender issues at UW-Superior in that they are based on earlier focus group research, committee members' perceptions, and ongoing conversations with individuals, other committees, and other organized groups at UW-Superior.

Also attached are the job opening announcement for the Women and Gender Issues Coordinator position; the position description; the new Coordinator's vita, and the September 1999 Status of Women at UW-Superior Report, which provides a context for understanding past perceptions and actions taken on the status of women at both the UW-System level and the UW-Superior level.

The Committee has read and approved the body of this report. We therefore submit it to you with the expectation that it satisfies UW-System President Katherine Lyall's requirement for all campuses to report by January 2001 on their progress on the status of women.

## **PROGRESS ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN AT UW-SUPERIOR**

### **Section One: Initial Activities on the Status of Women**

In the fall of 1998, the Women's Studies Committee at UW-Superior took up a discussion unfolding at the Women's Studies Consortium level concerning the status of women in the UW System. The UW-Superior Women's Studies (WST) Committee followed the progress at the state level through its campus representative on the System's committee and decided to do its own campus review.

#### **Focus Groups at the System and Campus Levels**

Representatives of the WST Committee began to hold campus focus groups for students and for staff on these matters in January of 1999, prior to the System "Status" Committee visit to campus (in April 1999). After the system-held focus groups, the UW-Superior focus groups continued to meet. Because the previous meetings had felt too big and too broad and because some women thought that concerns of specific groups were not being heard when they met as one, staff met in three different groups: Classified Staff, Academic Staff, and Faculty. Students also continued to meet as a focus group.

#### **Report on the Status of Women at UW-Superior**

Over the summer, a draft report was put together, and then when the academic year (1999-2000) began, all four groups were asked for their reactions and for any suggested changes. A final Status of Women at the UW-Superior Report was written so that concerns of each group were delineated. While those attending the meetings did not say that they spoke for all women within their group, they did seem to represent a cross-section of their group. They also felt that, even if some women (rather than all) in their group were experiencing the identified problems, it was important that these problems be recognized.

The report was organized into five sections: Section I is a brief overview, followed by Section II, which contains a history of its writing; Section III covers the points each group had to say; Section IV summarizes and pulls out the themes; and Section V gives recommendations. The report and its recommendations were presented to the Chancellor and Vice Chancellor at the end of September 2000 (See Attachments for full report).

#### **Implementation of Report's Recommendations**

The report initiated a series of meetings that led to the implementation of the first recommendation: the establishment of a Standing Committee on the Status of Women, with representatives chosen through their respective governing bodies. This Committee then met with the Chancellor and Vice Chancellor to work on the second recommendation: a new 50% position to be filled by a Coordinator of Women's and Gender Issues, beginning in the fall of 2000. This person would report to the Vice Chancellor and Chancellor and hold a position somewhat equivalent to the Multicultural Affairs Coordinator in that he or she would work to improve the

campus climate in areas related to women's and gender concerns. Student support and leadership was instrumental in persuading administration to move forward with this request.

A Search and Screen Committee representing all four groups was organized as a sub-committee of the Status Committee and began the search process, looking for a candidate with the unique combination of academic and grassroots-advocacy credentials (Job Opening Announcement and Position Description attached). Out of more than 20 applicants, Dianna Hunter was chosen, and she assumed her responsibilities on August 1, 2000.

## **Section Two: Activities of the Coordinator**

The new Coordinator of Women's and Gender Issues, Dianna Hunter, has undertaken a number of tasks outlined in her position description, and she has worked with the Standing Committee on Women's Issues (formerly the Status of Women) to further define her role and responsibilities. More specifically, she has undertaken and performed the following tasks:

- Meeting with and providing advocacy and referrals for individuals on women's and gender issues, including chilly climate; backlash; domestic abuse; gender inequities in athletics; racism and cultural bias in instruction and curriculum; day care needs; classified staff concerns; and homophobia.
- Convening the Standing Committee on Women's Issues and assisting the committee chair.
- Designing and maintaining a web site <<http://frontpage.uwsuper.edu/wgi/>> with contents and regular updates based on campus issues, events, and concerns.
- Designing and delivering trainings on Title IX and Providing a Safe and Supportive Atmosphere for GLBT/Q students, with more trainings to be developed as needed.
- Networking on campus and advocating on women's and gender issues by working with Student Senate members and participating in meetings of Faculty Senate, Academic Staff Senate, the Women's Studies Committee, the Standing Committee on Women's Issues, the Day Care Committee, the Dean's Colloquia on Gender, the Women's Studies Search Committee, and the Affirmative Action Committee.
- Networking within the System by attending the Wisconsin Women in Higher Education Leadership conference in Milwaukee October 19-20, 2000, and by facilitating Louise Root-Robbins' visit to UWS on November 7.
- Networking between the community and the campus by coordinating the Duluth-Costa Rica Feminist Exchange's visit by three Costa Rican women to Duluth-Superior on October 11-24, 2000, and the Northcountry Women's Coffeehouse's Intergenerational Discussion for Lesbians and Queer Women on November 3, 2000.

- Facilitating UWS' participation in the Women and Science Teleconference on November 17, 2000.
- Advising the Queer and Allied Student Union (the reorganized 10% Society).
- Developing a new Women's Studies Special Topics Course: Current Gender Issues.

### **Section Three: Activities of the Standing Committee**

The Standing Committee on Women's Issues meets weekly or every other week, as needed, and includes two members from each of the following campus constituencies: students, classified staff, academic staff, and faculty. Current members include students Tory Thayer, Joanne Jensen; classified staff Emily Levings and Gretchen Walkup; academic staff member Nancy Merrill; and faculty members Tim Crow, Suzanne Griffith; and other interested people. Academic staff member Karen Strewler plans to join the committee for spring semester. Currently, the committee is working on goals, objectives, and priorities for the short and long term.

While the official response to the committee's work has been positive, with many friendly overtures that bode well, committee members report subtle resistance and even overt backlash from various communities—not just the university community—when initiating actual projects.

Copies of the Standing Committee's goals and objectives are attached in rough draft form, including a draft provided by the student members of the committee. We look forward to working with the System Office of Women. We hope to see a Vision 2010 for Gender Equity, which we envision as a system-wide initiative, equal in scope and importance to Plan 2008: Quality through Racial and Ethnic Diversity.