1990 Proposal for Research on the Status of Women at the University of Tennessee

Commission for Women

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PROPOSED RESEARCH ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

The 1989-90 Commission for Women recommends that a new study of the status of women at the University of Tennessee be instituted, for no thorough investigation has been conducted since that of the Task Force on Women in the early 1970s. The research should focus on areas identified in the Task Force on Women's Report and subsequent Commission for Women Annual Reports, as well as "new" issues being raised on our campus and at peer institutions.

The Commission for Women (CFW) believes that an appropriate study could be conducted without burdensome levels of expenditure. Some questions can be addressed by analysis of existing institutional records and affirmative action data. Other questions require individual responses. Except when a representative sample may be required, information could be collected on various issues by having the last page of campus publications (e.g., "The Networker" or "Staff Stuff") serve as a questionnaire or comment sheet. For some issues, data need to be obtained from comparable institutions. Such data presumably could be obtained through the mail.

This report identifies areas for investigation. Under each heading a brief review of the topic is presented, then issues to address and possible ways to address them are suggested.

Administrative/Exempt Staff

The CFW is interested both in the opportunities for advancement in administration and the adequate representation of women at all levels and areas of campus administration. Over the years, efforts to stimulate change often have died because of two arguments: (a) various positions are unique prohibiting salary comparisons, and (b) titles are not meaningful.

Issues to Address: As the administration has grown in size, what has happened to the proportion of administrators who are female? Are there differences in the sex ratio by area/college? If so, why? Do women and men have comparable opportunities for advancement? Are salaries comparable?

Possible Actions: Trend data on the representation of women in the administration need to be collated. The length of time women and men remain in positions need to be compared. If women remain in positions longer than men, then procedures for advancement will require further examination.

The Chancellor is having faculty members placed in steps and
ranks using the University of California system as a model, so now may be an appropriate time to rationalize non-instructional exempt staff positions by identifying and implementing a ranking system.

Faculty Salary Differentials

The University of Tennessee has prepared and disseminated annual reports comparing female and male faculty salaries. And, equalization money has been used to raise the salaries of some female faculty whose salaries appeared to be below those of comparable males.

Issue 1. A persistent differential appears in female and male faculty salaries not explained by variables included in the regression models. The unexplained variance could be due to gender or other variables not used in the analysis.

Possible Actions: (a) Add or delete variables to reduce the unexplained variance, (b) consult with statisticians/economists and/or other institutions to see if we need to modify our campus salary study, and/or (c) remove administrators from the data base.

Issue 2. In different years different approaches have been used to equalize women's salaries.

Possible Actions: The central administration may need to establish an equalization plan which would adjust salaries over the course of years, i.e., specify priorities.

Issue 3. Equalization pay never compensates for "lost" pay.

Possible Action: Departments and Colleges which consistently have had underpaid female faculty should be identified. If such units are identified, the campus administration could work closely with them to correct chronic problems.

Support Staff

For a number of years, the issue most often raised with the CFW was job reclassification. Some employees perceive that the level of their supervisor determines their job classification rather than the tasks they perform.

As the campus increasingly has hired outside contractors, privatized services, possibly affecting employees perceptions of their job security and opportunities for advancement.

Issues of Concern: Are bases and opportunities for job reclassification a problem? Is it clear what criteria differentiate job levels? Does the job classification system work equally well for jobs that are not secretarial/clerical?

Possible Action: Solicitation of comments/concerns by utilizing
Staff Stuff.

Women's Center

What type of Women's Center would be appropriate at The University of Tennessee long was debated. Vice Chancellor Scheurer supported a Women's Center to serve students. It is located in the University Center. Over the years the Women's Center has not developed a clear positive identity, as the International House and Black Cultural Center have.

Issues to address: Staff support for the Women's Center is limited. Currently a part time graduate assistant and undergraduate volunteers staff the center. The space and resource materials perhaps could be better and more fully utilized, if the Center could be staffed differently/more fully.

Possible Actions: Collect data on Women's Centers at peer institutions. Consult the Women's Studies Program about how the two programs could best complement each other in serving student needs.

Sexual Harassment (Sexual Assault)

Increasing societal awareness and government regulations have prompted various developments (programs, affirmative action guidelines). Yet, many students and employees appear to lack a clear understanding of what constitutes sexual harassment, as well as how they may seek redress.

Issue 1. Are employees, supervisors and students well informed about what constitutes sexual harassment and what avenues of redress are available?

Possible Actions: Distribution of a pamphlet on sexual harassment. Specify and publicize procedures for reporting and investigating possible cases of sexual harassment.

Issue 2. How prevalent a problem is sexual harassment? Are there campus areas where there is a pattern of perceived sexual harassment?

Possible Action: Survey employees and students about the incidence of various behaviors which constitute sexual harassment.

Admissions and Awards

The Task Force on Women was interested in any sex differences in admissions and awards. The Commission for Women has not addressed admissions and awards for some years. Recent reports in the media indicate that nationally women constitute more than half of the undergraduate student population, but they receive less than half of the awards distributed.
Issue to Address: Are there sex differences in need based awards?

Possible Actions: Examine trend data (statistics for 5 or 10 year intervals) on recruitment of female students by college.

   a) Percentages of female and male applicants admitted.
   b) Percentages of female and male students by College.
   c) Percentages of female and male scholarship applicants who receive awards.

Reentry Students

Various efforts have been made to address the special needs of students first entering or returning to higher education. Initial interest was in women's special needs, although over time the needs of all reentry students were addressed through publications such as Encore. A group called Students Older Than Average (SOTA) was sponsored. The Graduate School provides a limited number of fellowships for reentry women.

Last spring the Chancellor's committee on reentry students was disbanded and its functions moved to Student Affairs under Vice Chancellor Scheurer.

Issues to Address: Should the University actively seek to recruit older than average students? Who is responsible for reentry students issues now? Do these students have special housing needs?

Possible Actions: Collect information from other institutions. Consult with representatives from the Evening School who are the first point of contact for a number of reentry students. Review recommendations from committee reports to former Chancellor Reese.

Safety

For many years, the CFW has pressed for improved lighting and the lighting at various location has improved. The blue lights and the escort van service have contributed to campus safety, also. Whether the safety of employees such as library staff who work in the evening is sufficiently addressed is unknown.

Safety generally has been seen as an issue of protecting members of the campus community from assault, but also it should include protection from other types of harm. Secretarial/clerical workers often spend significant portions of the work day in front of video display units.

Issues 1. What other measures may be taken to protect members of the campus community from assault?
Possible Actions: Soliciting views of students and employees about what is unsafe—what could be improved. Exploring the merits of new strategies, e.g., posting notices of where problems have occurred recently, so people can take precautions or having security officers on "walking beats." Is the escort van service meeting campus needs for transportation after dark?

Issue 2. What proactive measures could be pursued to discourage students from assaulting one another?

Possible Action: Finding out what the safety and alcohol committees are doing to increase awareness of how alcohol consumption is linked with safety problems.

Issue 3. Are employees adequately informed about possible detrimental health affects associated with the use of video display terminals?

Possible Action: Consulting with Personnel about what information is disseminated to employees and how employees are encouraged to protect themselves from harm.

Women's Studies

In response to the Task Force on Women's report, the College of Liberal Arts appointed an Ad Hoc Committee on Women's Studies. And, in response to its report a Women's Studies Program was created. The Program has grown over the past 14 years in number of courses and students and evolved from a minor to a major.

Issues to Address: Does the program have the support needed to meet the conditions of the 1990s and beyond?

Possible Actions: Consult with the Chair of Women's Studies about program development plans and associated needs. Collect data on support for Women's Studies Programs at peer institutions.

Women's Athletics

The Task Force and various CFWs encouraged the development and equitable funding of Women's Athletics. The Women's Athletics program has grown and prospered in a relatively short span. Now the program reports to the system rather than the campus administration.

Issues to Address: What growth plans are there? What, if any, consequences are there with the new organizational reporting structure? How will it be funded in the future, specifically how reliant will it be on student activities fee funds?

Possible Actions: Funding data collected from institutions with comparable women's athletics programs (e.g., the University of Texas) might provide information about how to reduce dependence on the activities fee.
Child and Parental Care

The CFW has been interested in child care for many years. Some child care is available for daytime employees, but child care for third shift employees and students has not evolved.

As our population ages, various employers have been working on programs to assist employees who have extensive responsibilities caring for dependent parents. Data suggest women typically are more affected than men because they are the primary care givers. "Day care" for elderly dependents and leaves of absence for elder care soon may become more widespread concerns for campus employees.

Issue 1: To what extent does/can the University subsidize child care for employees? Should those not using it receive alternative/comparable benefits (e.g., elder care benefits)?

Possible Actions: Examine how other institutions finance employee child care and handle comparable benefits (e.g., "cafeteria" benefit plans).

Issue 2: How is the new organizational structure working?

Possible Action: Consult with Human Ecology about the new arrangements.

Issue 3: Is there a demonstrated need for drop-in child care?

Possible Action: Discuss with student government (undergraduate and graduate), reentry student representatives and employee representatives, whether students and employee perceive a need for drop-in child care and whether they would use it.

Issue 4: Should the university be developing plans to meet the needs of employees with elderly dependents who require their care?

Possible Action: Collect data from other organizations about provisions for employees with elder care related problems.

Extracurricular

Many student issues of the late 1960s and 1970s have disappeared, such as "hours" for female students and not male students. A few remain. For example, are some programs unintentionally structured to better serve males than females, such as the recreational program.

Greek organizations combine residential and campus organization questions. Sororities only have suites in the Panhellenic building and fraternities have residences, many on university property.
A "new" issue on a number of campuses (e.g., University of Missouri, Florida State, University of Georgia) has been "cerainty "little sister" organizations. Sexual assaults of female students have been associated with participation in "little sister" activities. Some national fraternal organizations have dropped or are considering dropping such programs and some universities have banned them. The CFW does not know if there have been any problems associated with such programs on our campus.

Issue 1: Much of the campus recreation program is oriented to participation in competitive intramural events. Women are often more interested in non-competitive activities, such as aerobics, than competitive activities.

Possible Actions: Obtain data about levels of male and female participation in campus recreational activities. Sample female students about whether they would be interested in and likely to participate in non-competitive program, such as aerobics, if they were made available.

Issue 2: Should sororities have the same opportunities as the male organizations?

Possible Action: Investigate why there was differential treatment of Greek organizations on the basis of sex. Can sororities acquire separate residences, if they so desire?

Issue 3: Have there been problems associated with the "little sister" organizations on campus? Does the campus have a fraternal education and monitoring program which would prevent problems similar to those which other universities have experienced?

Possible Action: Consult with student affairs personnel about what is happening on this campus.

Career Planning and Placement

No specific issues have been raised in this area; however, it might assist the university in providing the best service to all students if data were collected to address the following questions. (1) Are there significant sex differences in the number of female and male students who use the service? who receive interviews? who obtain jobs? (2) Is this service equally useful to female and male students?