

The Task Force on the Status of Women at DePauw University

Report to the President

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Executive Summary

Women's status at DePauw University mirrors the status of women in western society as a whole: signs of improvement are everywhere, but pockets of institutional and cultural resistance to change remain. DePauw is not the same place as it was 50, 25 or even 10 years ago. It is now a more racially, ethnically and religiously diverse institution, and this transformation did not come about accidentally. Rather, it has occurred because diversity itself became one of the University's leading goals. The prominence and importance of women on campus—as students, faculty and staff—has also increased dramatically. Indeed, women and their work sustain this campus community in ways too numerous to mention. But with this increased presence have come challenges for women, men and the institution that serves and governs them. Many of these challenges parallel larger societal problems, such as achieving pay equity and equal representation throughout organizational ranks. As the Task Force report demonstrates, DePauw has made great strides in these areas, though some concerns still linger. Women's status at DePauw, however, cannot be measured by statistics alone. For while the numbers tell a rather one-sided story of increasing equality and institutional success, another story emerges from the voices of women across the campus.

Put simply, women continue to struggle to feel at home here, both in terms of the cultural climate and institutional support of their needs. This struggle is not surprising, since the movement toward equality for women occurs within, and often in opposition to, a social

environment that was largely created by and for men. So as women make headway on this campus, as they seek to create an environment attuned to their own needs and desires, they encounter deeply engrained impediments toward change. These impediments, however, are not insurmountable. DePauw's own record of social progress in race relations and affirmative action attests to the powerful potential of administrative will and determination. It is with this spirit of progress and hope in mind that the Task Force makes recommendations to the President and University at large.

The following three structural recommendations have the greatest potential to impact, immediately and directly, the lives of women on campus:

- The addition of a staff nutritionist with eating disorders training, who could work with Dining Services, Counseling Services, Health Services, living units (and even DePauw employees who wish to develop healthier eating habits). A nutritionist is crucial in order to provide the appropriate treatment to students with disordered eating problems.
- The establishment of on-site traditional three-level daycare available year-round for children of University employees. Such an institution would serve the long-term needs of working parents within the University and offer an expedient solution for those parents with sporadic and unplanned needs. It would also relieve those employees who are sometimes pressured into babysitting children by faculty and administrators.

- The founding of a Women’s Center on campus that would serve as a resource center for faculty, staff and students interested in and acting on behalf of women’s issues at DePauw. The Women’s Center could be the place where the academics and the advocates come together to educate the DePauw community about issues important to women, as well as become the hub for the activities and programs available for women of all walks.

The remaining recommendations, while no less important, address the University’s ongoing efforts at cultural reform and progress:

- The President and his Cabinet should speak publicly and consistently about our zero-tolerance stance toward harassment of women.
- We should consult with DePauw legal counsel about our harassment policies and procedures to see what can be done to confront the issue in the absence of “formal” and “official” complaints.
- Document the family-friendly policies (job sharing, contract reductions, and flex-time) that the University honors and work with supervisors to employ these flexible practices on a more consistent basis. We believe that flexibility is possible more often than not, but we also believe that women employees don’t request flexibility because they presume it will be denied. The Human Resources office should conduct

an in-service training for all supervisors so that everyone is on the same page about this issue.

- Conduct gender issue orientations for department chairs, new faculty and University staff.
- Incorporate substantive programming into the *depauw.year1* program that addresses self-esteem and self-acceptance in an effort to get at some of the issues underlying eating disorders, alcohol abuse, drug use, sexual assault, etc. Winter Term, for example, is an ideal time to offer substantive in- and out-of-class education, experiences and programming directed at women and focusing on issues that are of particular concern to women students. Add programming to *depauw.year1* that educates students about lifestyle and sexual orientation differences as well.
- Implement a peer-advocacy program within the living units to address issues of eating disorders, sexual assault, body image, and alcohol and drug abuse.
- Identify an advocate for women athletes within the athletic department.
- Continue the mentoring program between senior and junior women faculty, paying careful attention to matches.

- Facilitate the networking of women faculty members, and support especially the faculty members who teach in the sciences.
- Look for opportunities within the recently awarded Mellon Grant (which will study faculty at all stages of their careers) to support the professional development of women faculty members who aspire to academic administrative positions.
- Design and conduct a comprehensive, longitudinal survey of students that will assess their attitudes, perceptions, experiences, behaviors, and values about what it means to be a successful woman student at DePauw, and that can document changes as we implement programs that can bring them about.
- Conduct a survey of all women who work at DePauw that will assess their needs, experiences, and perceptions relative to the work environment, and that will specifically measure the prevalence of sexual harassment in the workplace.

Report

The President of the University appointed the Task Force on the Status of Women at DePauw University (“Task Force”) in August 2001, and issued this charge:

- To study all aspects of the social, co-curricular, academic, mentoring, classroom climate, and employment status of women at DePauw (without entering into particular personnel or counseling issues or matters of the academic program);
- To identify and outline issues which need to be addressed as the University endeavors to provide a healthy and supportive climate for women in all aspects of University life;
- To recommend the structure of continuing organizations which will need to provide oversight of the status of women at DePauw.

The Task Force met weekly from September through December 2001. We interviewed more than 100 individuals on campus—students, faculty and staff—through one-on-one discussions as well as focus groups with various committees, student organizations, departments, etc. Three subcommittees were formed in October so that responsibility for

study and data collection was spread out among the Task Force members. We sought both anecdotal and statistical data that would help us to answer these questions:

- What is the current climate for women students, faculty and staff at DePauw?
- Is it a healthy climate? Why or why not?

What is a “healthy and supportive climate for women”? Toward what should we strive as a residential liberal arts college in a small, rural town in the Midwest? Are there characteristics of such a cultural and institutional climate that can guide us? We imagine that it might be characterized this way:

- Self-acceptance and healthy self-esteem are fostered in and out of the classroom
- Differences in experience, lifestyle and world view are valued and recognized
- Women’s physical and mental health are honored
- Women feel safe on our campus
- Visible and accessible role models and mentors are plentiful
- An array of social opportunities and living environments are available
- Conflict is resolved effectively in an open and trust-based environment
- Women are empowered to initiate change on their own behalf
- Employment flexibility and support are provided for working mothers
- Women are compensated fairly
- There is ongoing and comprehensive education for faculty, staff and students about issues of particular concern to women on campus

I. IS THIS A HEALTHY AND SUPPORTIVE CLIMATE FOR WOMEN STUDENTS?

It is difficult to refer to “women students” as a homogeneous group. At DePauw, as in the world, many communities of women exist, and these overlap in many ways. Our communities include women of color, white women, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered women, women of differing religious backgrounds, international women, first-generation women, and women from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Further, patterns of social affiliation (i.e. Greek or independent) create additional communities of women students at DePauw. Each community of women students has opinions and perceptions about whether DePauw’s climate is healthy. We were not able to address all issues in each community, nor were we able to collect enough anecdotal or statistical data about how issues manifest themselves within each community, which was a source of frustration. But we were able to identify common themes and common issues that pertain directly or indirectly to many women students at DePauw.

The healthiest and most supportive climate for women students, we believe, is one that accepts, embraces and understands the fundamental differences among women students, while at the same time celebrates the shared commonalities. The healthiest and most supportive climate for women students acknowledges through actions and words that the community of women students is a very rich tapestry of experiences, perspectives, lifestyles, understandings and personalities.

It is our view that during these four years—typically from ages 18 to 22--women should feel empowered and supported in their quest for individuality both as scholars and as full participants in rich social and cultural lives. Their holistic development as women should be supported by the DePauw community, and they should graduate with high self-esteem, a real sense of their many abilities and gifts, and lasting friendships that come from living and learning with others at a unique institution.

In order to understand the climate for women students now, and to assess it in relation to the one we can imagine, we worked first to understand the women themselves—their own perceptions about the environment in which they live and learn at DePauw, their expectations, and their behaviors. We asked them to answer the question, “Is this a healthy and supportive climate for women?” Armed with their answers, which reflected striking consistency, we interviewed the professionals at DePauw who work with students, both in and out of the classroom, in order to gain a broader perspective.

Many of the women students with whom we spoke--of all ages, and within all constituencies—are struggling to develop a healthy self-image. Whether that struggle is over body image, how to maneuver successfully through the academic and social systems here (particularly if they are multicultural or first-generation college students), conflicts within themselves emanating from cruel sorority stereotypes (we have heard that some sororities are labeled by both men and women students as “the fat girl house,” “the Barbie Doll house,” “the eating disorder house”), the fear of being a social misfit, or

questioning one's sexual identity, this time in a woman's life often sets in motion much of her adult psychology and sense of self-esteem.

Too many women students told us that a prescribed "ideal woman student" exists at DePauw. The "ideal" DePauw woman student is characterized as very thin, white, heterosexual, well dressed, socially active and successful, smart enough to earn good grades but not to threaten anyone by them, and destined to be an important person after college. When asked where this image comes from, women students report that the environment creates the image. The women "majority" students at DePauw say that they and their peers are very aware of this image, and feel as though they should aspire to it. Those women students who consider themselves not part of the "majority" bemoan the existence of this image but think it is a true "ideal" upheld by most men and women students here. And as a result, they feel further marginalized and cynical.

What is going on here? Why are women students perceiving that DePauw's culture fosters conforming to an unrealistic "ideal"? Our academic program values finding one's own path and training one's mind to think critically and independently. We think women recognize these as "in-class" expectations. But outside of class they seem to feel extraordinary social pressures to "fit in" and conform to group expectations. Perhaps what they are really expressing is a partial recognition that their lives as women students are fractured in a new way—one set of expectations as intellectuals in training, and another as social beings. Is this what they mean when they say, "At DePauw, it's more

important that you succeed socially”? Do women students, and men students for that matter, think that being a smart woman at DePauw is a desirable goal?

From our earliest discussions it was clear to us that the issues that were most troubling to most women students were outside of the classroom. In focus groups and interviews, many seemed to be quite happy with the academic environment here. We did hear several comments from women about the low numbers of women students and faculty members in some departments. We also received some reports of particular faculty members behaving in certain ways, but we were careful not to draw generalized conclusions from those reports. For example, if a certain faculty member is known to say things like, “that pretty girl over by the window,” or is known to call on male students before calling on a female student, or is thought to have a reputation for not encouraging women to pursue graduate school, does this mean that sexism is rampant in the classrooms at DePauw? No, there is no reason to think so. But does it mean that some individual male members of the faculty speak or act in ways that may offend women students? Probably yes. For the most part, however, the in-class experiences of white women students are positive.

Unfortunately, this is not always the case for women students of color. Many struggle to feel included inside the classroom, and unless they establish a mentoring relationship with a faculty member during their first year, they are less likely over time to feel part of DePauw’s academic community. The Williams-Palmer report points out that DePauw has an ongoing challenge recruiting women students of color who want to study science

here, and in developing targeted support services for them after matriculation. (The lack of a woman of color on the science faculty also inhibits the process.) Subtle racism and sexism over a period of time eventually results in women and women students of color beginning to question their ability to succeed both in and out of the classroom. Ethnic and gender biases have a chilling effect on the environment.

In nearly every discussion we had with women students—all women students—we were urged to take a close look at the impact of Greek culture on women as we sought to study the social climate at DePauw. At present, most women students are affiliated with Greek organizations. In fact, we heard many women say that being a part of the Greek system is why they came to DePauw.

Upper-class students, independent students, and first-year students all had remarkably similar perceptions of how the Greek system affects the climate for women at DePauw. On the positive side, all cited lasting friendships, leadership opportunities, the available social network and feeling as if they were part of the social mainstream as attributes. But the list of issues with which Greek women appear to struggle, perhaps more than their independent peers, is worrisome: disordered eating and distorted body image, alcohol and drug use and abuse, and sexual assault. (Within the historically black sororities, and within the communities of women students of color in general, body image and disordered eating issues, as well as alcohol and drug use and abuse, do not seem to be as pervasive. And we applaud the recent efforts of Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority to reach out

to the DePauw community through the hosting of the workshop, “How To Be A Healthy College Woman.”)

These issues are part of a larger cultural problem, of course, and thus it would be inappropriate to lay the blame for what surely are issues on most college campuses at the feet of the Greek system. But it became our belief over time that the Greek system may in fact exacerbate some of them.

Some first-year women who planned to rush this spring spent the first semester feeling paranoid about not “getting into” the sorority they valued most highly. “If I don’t get into _____ I don’t know what I’ll do!” They heard from upper-class students and their friends—both men and women-- about “what type of girl” fits into which sorority. They really do believe that their social futures will be determined by who will accept them. An invitation to enter this system is a major milestone and a significant part of their first year in college. Despite the fact that they have numerous trepidations about it, most choose ultimately to participate and hope for the best.

The Greek system for women is based on exclusivity. This is, in essence, what sorority rush is about. A woman student shows her best self to a house, a house shows its best self to her, and through a process that can be either thrilling or devastating, each decides if the fit is right.

There is a marked difference in the perception among first-year women and upper-class women in this regard. Some first-year women students on the outside of the Greek system looking in view it as a kind of necessary evil: fear of not being accepted socially drives participation. Among upper-class women students, however, a kind of confidence about their social position emerges once they are in the system and part of a group that they have in some way chosen.

Women who are not a part of the Greek system seem to be happy with their decisions, but some feel very limited socially, and wish for stronger social communities apart from the Greek system. With the addition of more theme houses, a new social space at the Walden Inn and fewer first-year women students affiliating than a decade or so ago, DePauw will, over time, provide more social opportunities for these women. But at the moment many independent women students feel as though they work against the social current on campus.

Regardless of the specific communities to which our women students belong, too many wrestle with issues—the long continuum of eating disorders, distorted body image, alcohol use and abuse, and sexual assault—that may have roots in the struggle for self-acceptance and self-esteem. We hypothesize that they may in fact be linked to women's perceptions about the social environment. Perhaps if women students felt as though the climate were free of judgment, and DePauw were a safe place in which to grow and develop, we might see fewer incidents of disordered eating, alcohol abuse, sexual assault, and the like.

We found the support services and programming resources in place now for women struggling to meet needs. Demand simply exceeds supply. The professionals we interviewed said that at best they try just to keep up, working mostly in a reactive rather than a proactive mode. They wish they had more time to do educational outreach and programming, but resources are limited. The return of a third professional in the counseling office may assist that office in relieving the current overload in that area, but Residence Life, Greek Life and Health Services all pointed to resource shortages when we asked about more programming and outreach opportunities.

Some suggested to us that peer-assistance and peer-support programs that have been in place in past years (but have been eliminated) need to be reinstated in order to relieve some of the pressure on the service providers. Some schools have student-driven groups that serve as support groups for women who are facing some of these issues. At DePauw the one model we found of such a program is the Sexual Assault Survivor Advocate (SASA) program, which has 14 students trained and working as peer advocates for sexual assault victims.

In our discussions with women athletes and their coaches, several individuals suggested the University identify someone within the athletic department to serve as an advocate for women athletes. This void becomes apparent particularly when a woman athlete is not comfortable speaking with her coach, who may be a man, about a specific issue.

Women students are very aware of disordered eating as a problem, and some women report that everyone they know at DePauw—including themselves—exhibits some type of disordered eating behavior. We are troubled that this is considered entirely normal within the DePauw student culture. One focus group of students estimated that 80% of what women talk about outside of class has to do with dieting, their weight, their appearance, who has a problem and who doesn't, etc.

While the two highest at-risk groups of women for eating disorders are Greek women and women athletes, according to national data, the reality is that any college-age woman can have an eating disorder. (The coaches of women's sports seem to pay very careful attention to this issue with their women athletes, and several have participated successfully in intervention and treatment programs.) While we don't have data that measures the full scope of the issue for women students at DePauw, some light may be shed on the prevalence here by the recent survey of Greek students: 45% of those responding to the survey (both men and women) indicated that eating disorders are an issue within the Greek system, and 34% of the respondents felt that Greek life at DePauw promotes eating disorders. A major weakness in our care and treatment currently is the lack of a staff nutritionist with an eating disorders specialty, who typically is a member of the team of professionals (along with a physician and a counselor) that treats students with disordered eating issues.

Alcohol use and abuse among women students could be the subject of a separate report, and perhaps it should be. It was mentioned time and again during discussions about

health and wellness and social pressures on women students. And not one woman challenged this focus group question: “Alcohol plays a big role in the lives of most women students at DePauw.”

There are far more women students who consider themselves drinkers than not. Most women students with whom we spoke told us that they knew at the time of matriculation that DePauw students are drinkers. They reported that as prospective students they learned from tour guides, host students and word-of-mouth in their home communities that parties at fraternity houses are the hot social ticket on weekends: “We are told that at DePauw you work hard and play hard.” Drinking in residence halls for first-year students is very common, according to students and residence life staff, and perhaps the most distressing comments about that from first-year women were along the lines of: “There’s nothing to do here except drink” or “I didn’t drink in high school, but I do now because that’s what everyone here does.” The survey of Greek students supports all of the anecdotal evidence that we heard with the following statistics: 83% of those responding felt that alcohol abuse was an issue within the Greek system, compared to 57% in 1997. Forty-four percent of the Greek students responding felt that the Greek system itself promotes alcohol abuse. (Data from national surveys suggest that Greek students drink more heavily in college than non-Greek students.)

We are troubled by the over-consumption of alcohol by women for two reasons. First, it has a negative impact on health, particularly when alcohol misuse is combined with compulsive dieting and/or the mixture of prescription medication and alcohol. Second, it

is directly linked to sexual assault. The Sexual Assault Task Force reports that 90% of the sexual assaults against women students involve alcohol.

There is significant anecdotal data from student affairs administrators and students themselves to support the conclusion that sexual assault is a reality, despite the fact that it may go unreported more often than not. (The survey of Greek students found that 38% of the respondents felt that acquaintance rape was an issue for the Greek system, and 10% felt that the Greek system actually promoted it.) Feelings of guilt among women (“I shouldn’t have been drinking...I must have been sending signals that I shouldn’t have sent”), and peer pressure not to rat on a member of a fraternity house (“Don’t file a complaint or you will get the whole house in trouble...our sorority’s reputation will go down the drain once it comes out”) deter victims from taking action on their own behalf.

We find it disconcerting that guilt, shame and peer pressure could be so influential as to deny a sexual assault victim her judicial rights, or at least her opportunity to pursue a complaint against an offender. This speaks very poorly of our social environment. Why aren’t women students outraged over this? We guess that women are concluding it is simply easier for all to say nothing and move on. But in the end, the woman is the double victim, and the perpetrator (and his social community) avoids responsibility. On the positive side, student affairs staff has seen an increase in women students pursuing services such as counseling and medical treatment, and seeking advocacy to help them negotiate any academic fallout as a result of a sexual assault. This is likely due to the fact that in the past three years sexual assault services have been better developed and more

widely publicized. It is made clear to students that victims are entitled to care and support, and that care and support do not depend on whether a student pursues a judicial case.

One faculty member with whom we spoke said that in her experience, women students seem to have a “high tolerance level for social bullshit.” She spoke specifically about comments from men students to women students that she was appalled to hear, but that didn’t seem to faze the women at all. Another wrote on a recent questionnaire that was sent to all women faculty: “It is most important to me that we create at DePauw an intellectual and social environment in which our women students feel respected, as individuals and as women, and in which they have enough respect for themselves as smart, talented individuals, to recognize when their best interests are not being served.” This Task Force agrees completely, but recognizes that we have a long way to go, as the Campus Climate survey shows.

The Campus Climate data, which were collected in the Spring 2001 semester by researchers at Pennsylvania State University, were analyzed and submitted by the Office of Multicultural Affairs in time to be included in this report. 832 members of the DePauw community completed the survey: 552 students (25% of the total student community—and 60% of whom were members of Greek organizations), 94 faculty (41% of the faculty) and 186 administrators and staff (37% of this group).

The findings were disturbing on a number of fronts. On the one hand, 89% of the respondents felt that the overall campus climate was *accepting* of women, and only 3% felt that it was not. But, consider the following statistics:

- 78% of the respondents have experienced a student making a disparaging comment about women, and 37% of the respondents have heard a student making a disparaging comment about women 6 or more times;
- Respondents also heard faculty, staff and administrators making disparaging remarks about women—more often than about any other “underrepresented” group. When a remark was made by someone other than a student, it came from a faculty member 37% of the time and from a staff member 25% of the time;
- 26% of the respondents reported having personally experienced conduct that has interfered with their ability to work or learn, and 53% of those respondents said that the conduct was due to gender;
- 48% of the respondents have observed conduct on this campus that created a hostile or offensive environment, and 54% of those respondents said that the conduct was towards persons of different genders;
- A woman who is also a member of an already marginalized group (either because of race or sexual orientation) is very likely to have experienced harassment at some

point, and probably has experienced it multiple times. Among lesbian, transgendered and bisexual women, 56% reported that they had been harassed.

These data suggest a number of strange “disconnects.” To what can we attribute them? Is it that issues are “normalized” within the culture? Why don’t women link an “accepting environment” to a healthy one? Do they recognize the seeming conflicts embedded in their own perceptions and experiences? If derogatory remarks about women and toward women are as rampant at DePauw as it would appear from the Campus Climate data, where are the harassment complaints? Two-thirds of the incidents seem to be students making derogatory remarks about other students. Why aren’t women students demanding change? If this harassment is as widespread as the Campus Climate data indicate, let us call it what it is and, as a community, refuse to accept it.

Recommendations

- Design and conduct a comprehensive, longitudinal survey of students that will assess their attitudes, perceptions, experiences, behaviors and values about what it means to be a successful woman student at DePauw, and that can document changes as we implement programs that can bring them about.
- Incorporate substantive programming into the *depauw.year1* program that addresses self-esteem and self-acceptance in an effort to get at some of the issues underlying eating disorders, alcohol abuse, drug use, sexual assault, etc. Winter Term, for

example, is an ideal time to offer substantive in- and out-of-class education, experiences and programming directed at women and focusing on issues that are of particular concern to women students. A course on body image, for example, would probably be a most popular offering, especially if taught by a member of the faculty who has faced such issues. This year's course on self-esteem and performance was receiving rave reviews from students we interviewed in January, and many of the topics we probed were being explored passionately by the women enrolled in the course.

- Use the *depauw.year1* program, which has a diversity education component, to educate first-year students about differences in lifestyle and sexual orientation.
- Employ a staff nutritionist with an eating disorders specialty, who could work with Dining Services, Counseling Services, Health Services, living units (and even DePauw employees who wish to develop healthier eating habits). A nutritionist is crucial in order to provide the appropriate treatment to women with disordered eating problems.
- Implement a peer-advocacy program within the living units to address issues of eating disorders, sexual assault, body image, and alcohol and drug abuse.
- Identify an advocate for women athletes within the athletic department.

II. IS THE CLIMATE FOR WOMEN FACULTY MEMBERS HEALTHY AND SUPPORTIVE?

Another area to which we gave our attention was the climate for women faculty members inside the classrooms and academic departments of DePauw. (The “family-friendliness” of the academic workplace is dealt with below in Section III.)

Women faculty members with whom we spoke feel more supported and recognized now than in past years. They report specific progress in dealing with disruptive students since the creation of the Disruptive Student Policy. For new women faculty members, the first year in the classroom at DePauw can be a challenge, particularly if, as is sometimes the case, the social skills of the students are more fully developed than those of the faculty member. Women faculty members who seek mentoring from senior colleagues about establishing authority in the classroom early are provided with high-quality faculty development attention, we believe. But there are some women faculty members with whom we spoke who feel as if the mentoring available to them within their departments is quite weak.

Women faculty members reported certain experiences with students in the classroom, particularly male students, which should be noted. There were numerous reports of women faculty members being challenged by male students in particularly hostile ways: “Occasionally I run into male students who want to challenge me just because I am a woman. They seem to find it threatening to have me be smarter than they are, and they seem to want to dominate the class. I know this can and does happen even more often to

women faculty of color.” Another respondent said, “I think younger women faculty face ‘respect’ issues. Male, and some female, students are more likely to challenge you on grades and assignments.” When we spoke to women faculty members of color about this specifically, some had very detailed experiences to report, and others had not really experienced it at all.

On the “life inside my department” front, women faculty members from whom we heard had a few complaints to register. (Interestingly, however, we did not hear from a single woman faculty member who wanted to tell us that she has no issues whatsoever within her department.) Many of the issues about which we heard had to do with the management of the department. More than one woman indicated her dissatisfaction about being one of the members of the department who was “available” to teach at certain times because she does not have children, and therefore could not possibly have a reason to object to 8 a.m. or 2-4 p.m. time slots (when parents often are dealing with getting children to and from school). Some indicated in conversations with us that subtle incidents of sexism occur from time to time within their departments. An example of this was submitted by a woman faculty member: “I made a comment in a department meeting, a reasonable one, which was dismissed by a male colleague in charge. When another male colleague later in the meeting made exactly the same point I’d made, the man in charge went out of his way to praise him, and no one seemed to notice what had happened. The incident stands out in my mind because this sort of thing doesn’t happen in such blatant form very often. Is it happening in subtle ways I’m not noticing?”

There were certain classroom-related issues on which all the women we interviewed agreed. Women students and women faculty members in the sciences lament the low numbers of women in their disciplines. Several women students related their own experiences of having been one of only a few women in a class. Faculty members who teach courses in which women students are underrepresented need to find ways to make the classroom environment a comfortable and welcoming one for these students so that their full participation is encouraged.

Among the women coaches with whom we spoke, particularly those who have been at DePauw for several years, there were positive comments about the gender equity progress that has been made in the last three years. But both women athletes and coaches also perceive that staffing is not even across sports and that staffing issues are not always addressed in a timely manner. They have not always felt that their concerns have been heard adequately by the athletic administration.

Recommendations

- The President and his Cabinet should speak publicly and consistently about our zero-tolerance stance toward harassment of women.
- Consult with DePauw legal counsel about our harassment policies and procedures to see what can be done to confront the issue in the absence of “formal” and “official” complaints.

- Conduct gender issue orientations for department chairs and new faculty.
- Continue the mentoring program between senior and junior women faculty, paying careful attention to matches.
- Facilitate the networking of women faculty members, and support especially the faculty members who teach in the sciences.
- Look for opportunities within the recently awarded Mellon Grant (which will study faculty at all stages of their careers) to support the professional development of women faculty members who aspire to academic administrative positions.

III. HOW HEALTHY IS THE CLIMATE FOR ALL WOMEN WHO WORK AT DEPAUW?

Since our vision for a healthy and supportive climate for women at DePauw includes adequate support for working mothers, as well as the assurance that women are being compensated fairly, we studied carefully the “family-friendliness” of our own policies, and requested and reviewed compensation data for women faculty members, administrators and staff in order to determine if women are paid fairly at DePauw. We also studied the frequency of sexual harassment and its effect on the climate for women employees.

Currently there are 655 full-time employees at DePauw: 288 are male and 367 are female. Of the 208 full-time faculty members, 122 are men and 86 are women. Among the administration the distribution is 88 men and 103 women, for a total of 191. Among the hourly employees, who total 256, there are 78 men and 178 women. Within the leadership of the institution, only one of the vice presidents is a woman, but the direct reports to the vice presidents are split almost evenly between men and women.

Within the faculty, it is clear that in the senior ranks men outnumber women. This is due to practices of many years ago when women faculty in their junior years were neither encouraged nor supported in the pursuit of promotion. Fortunately, these days are behind us, and the current academic administration is committed to hiring more women faculty, providing them with professional mentoring and support that encourages the pursuit of promotion up through the ranks, including lengthening the time to the third-year review and tenure decision in order to accommodate women faculty members who have families. With the current pipeline loaded with new women faculty members, we will over time see a relatively equal distribution of men and women throughout the ranks.

Among department chairs and program heads, twice as many departments are currently headed by men as by women (this point is in some part related to the make-up of the tenured senior faculty). None of the academic honors programs currently has a woman as its director, although women have served as past directors. Beginning with the 2002-03 academic year, the Science Research Fellows program will have its first woman director.

We also examined the distribution of men and women participating in the faculty recognition programs, and found that among University Professorships, Distinguished Professor Awards, Distinguished University Professors, Distinguished Visiting Professors, Departmental Professorial Chairs, and Faculty Fellowships, the ratio of men to women is 70:30.

Despite these cautionary facts about the gender distribution in some of the more visible or recognized positions, we found that men and women are being compensated equitably. Many have acknowledged for us that at previous times in the University's history compensation inequities did exist for men and women performing like jobs. But after examining closely the wage scales and compensation data for full-time women and men employees at DePauw, we are satisfied that pay equity exists among the genders. We also realize that pay equity does not necessarily mean "fair wages."

Much of the credit for bringing about pay equity on behalf of full time hourly employees at DePauw should go to the Hourly Support Staff Committee. A wage scale is in place now that takes into account years of service and classification in order to compute an hourly rate that is gender blind. At the A11 level, for example, a Dining Services Worker (usually a woman) and a Facilities Services Provider (usually a man) both with three years' experience at DePauw make the same hourly rate of \$8.45 per hour. At the B23 level, male and female police officers with five years' experience both make \$11.50 per hour.

There remains, however, a widespread perception among many that compensation for men and women is not equitable. We heard many individuals express their certainty that inequities exist. We should do everything we can to promote the facts and eradicate the misperceptions in some kind of open way that respects confidentiality at the same time. Unfortunately, we have no recommendation to make here about how to accomplish this, but suffice it to say that the University would earn significant respect from its employees if it could be done.

Benefits for full-time employees at DePauw vary depending upon whether one is classified either as an hourly or a salaried employee. We took a close look at those benefits that affect women in general and working mothers specifically.

Hourly employees who accrue paid sick days are now able to use up to 10 sick days (their entire allotment) to stay home with a sick child before using accrued vacation time (also an annual allotment of 10 days). Until very recently, the policy was five sick days per annum in support of an ill child. Salaried employees do not receive paid sick days, but also are able to stay home with a sick child without debiting their vacation time (20 days per year).

Pregnancy and delivery are treated as “medical conditions” by DePauw and therefore fall under the University’s “Paid Medical Leave—Wage Continuance” policy with regard to paid time off during or post pregnancy. Unlike some businesses and other organizations, and unlike the recommendations made by the AAUP in its “Statement of Principles on

Family Responsibilities,” DePauw does not have a policy that entitles new mothers to a set period of paid time off following delivery. Each woman’s doctor must complete a physician’s statement that releases the woman to return to work when she is “medically able” to do so. The doctor’s judgment and discretion, therefore, determine the amount of paid time off following a pregnancy.

For new mothers, salary continuance eligibility—the ability to remain in a paid status while one is medically “disabled”—has a cap that varies according to one’s status at DePauw. After the cap is reached, and all vacation time is exhausted, unpaid medical leave begins. For hourly employees the cap is 8 weeks. For salaried employees the cap is 6 months. The Administration reports that so long as there are no complications with a woman’s pregnancy, nearly all women return to work within about 6 weeks. But in situations where complications arise, hourly women employees are disadvantaged considerably. Women faculty who are new mothers have additional challenges to face if their delivery dates don’t happen to coincide with breaks in the academic calendar. Since they rely on the good graces of colleagues to cover for them in the interim, most with whom we spoke feel incredible pressure to get back to the classroom as soon as possible.

Clearly women employees at DePauw—and working mothers in particular—make the most use of family-friendly practices and policies. These include childcare, job sharing, flextime, contract reductions, and parental leave (covered under the federally mandated Family and Medical Leave Act). We were pleased to discover that the University has a number of family-friendly policies in place. Most of them, however, are undocumented

and probably unknown to most members of the DePauw community. The one that is documented and therefore public is the federally mandated Family and Medical Leave Act, a job protection program for employees who miss up to 12 weeks of work due to family-related needs.

Job sharing, flextime and contract reductions fall under the category of “unwritten” policies according to the Administration. That is, the practices do in fact exist quite frequently and arrangements such as these are negotiated on an individual basis between the employee and her supervisor according to her needs and the needs of her office.

Childcare and the challenge of finding high-quality childcare in Greencastle was a topic we were urged to explore by women and men alike. Unlike some other colleges, the University offers no on-site daycare. The Children’s Center, which is within two blocks of the DePauw campus, offers preferential placement for children of DePauw employees above the age of 2 ½, in exchange for an annual operating grant from the University. Infant care within Greencastle is very scarce, and the stress that this places on working parents at DePauw is enormous. In the HERI Faculty Survey done in 1998, more than 80% of the respondents indicated that childcare issues were “somewhat or extensively stressful.” The results of the recent survey of the faculty on February 4, 2002, about childcare support our conclusion that there is a considerable need for high-quality childcare in Greencastle. And with nearly one-third of the faculty retiring in the near future (and presumably a like number of new faculty joining the DePauw community),

satisfying their needs for childcare will be an important issue for both recruiting of new faculty and enhancing their quality of life in Greencastle.

What do employees do if they are caught in a childcare jam? DePauw's "official" policy does not allow bringing children to work. The enforcement and interpretation of that policy varies widely. If an employee asks the Human Resources Office whether it is permissible to bring a child to work, the answer is "no." If an employee does not ask, and just simply does it, the University usually will look the other way. We are troubled by the fact that some employees who work in hazardous areas are never allowed to have their children in their workplaces—for, say, a 30-minute period between the end of the school day and the end of a shift—but employees who work in offices might be allowed to do so. We have heard from some that certain offices and departments are virtual "daycare centers" from about 3-4:30 in the afternoon, and we have also been told by several women who are hourly employees that they have been asked to watch someone else's child while that individual has attended a meeting or taught a class, and in some cases, to care for a child who is too sick to go to school.

We had a difficult time determining how often women employees are sexually harassed at DePauw. We gather from the anecdotal evidence we collected from women employees that it happens (fairly) often, but it is not reported. The HERI survey of faculty in 1998 found that nearly 23% of the respondents indicated they had been sexually harassed. This in itself is an alarming statistic, but is especially so given that DePauw's rate was nearly three times the national rate among private four-year institutions (8.2%). It will be

important to note the results of the 2002 survey when they are available. Our own survey of women faculty yielded comments to corroborate our initial guess that sexual harassment happens, and supported our conclusion that women are not filing complaints because of fear of retaliation. One woman faculty member wrote compellingly and in great detail of an experience in which she was sexually harassed by a member of her academic department, and feared reporting it. Others recounted experiences that are still painful memories and which are known only to a few trusted colleagues.

Many of us on the Task Force know women who have experienced like instances of sexual harassment, but who have chosen not to take the steps necessary to file complaints as a result. Perhaps the first step for getting at this sensitive issue is for the University to conduct some kind of survey of all women employees that attempts to measure just how prevalent sexual harassment is. If it appears as if the problem is significant, the Sexual Harassment Committee can be charged to recommend steps that will root it out and create a zero-tolerance environment. We also suggest that the University's legal counsel again be asked to provide suggestions about our current policies and procedures regarding sexual harassment. Perhaps there are ways to confront it that are less formal and require less perceived risk for those who have been sexually harassed.

Recommendations

- Establish on-site traditional three-level daycare available year-round for children of University employees. This would be a true service for the working parents within the University and also would offer a solution for those whose needs are sporadic and sometimes unplanned. It also would relieve those employees who are asked to babysit children at various times by faculty and administrators, and who feel they cannot refuse.
- Document the family-friendly policies (job sharing, contract reductions, and flex-time) that the University honors and work with supervisors to employ these flexible practices on a more consistent basis. We believe that flexibility is possible more often than not, but we also believe that women employees don't request flexibility because they assume that it will be denied. The Human Resources office should conduct an in-service training for all supervisors so that everyone is on the same page about this issue.
- Conduct a survey of all women who work at DePauw that will assess their needs, experiences, and perceptions relative to the work environment, and that will specifically measure the prevalence of sexual harassment in the workplace.

IV. FINAL THOUGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

DePauw's campus is considered to be a safe campus by most of the women with whom we spoke. We heard about two or three isolated incidents in which a woman student, faculty member or staff member did not feel safe, but nearly everyone with whom we spoke felt as though she does not fear for her safety on campus. On the other hand, we wish that the climate for women at DePauw had more trust and less fear built into it. We discussed and evaluated whether there are sufficient "remedies" in place for women should they find themselves sexually harassed, or facing a discriminatory firing, or dealing with an abusive professor, or struggling to cope as a sexual assault victim, and we found that there is quite a bit of infrastructure in place now. The problem seems to be that women don't often use the infrastructure as an avenue for recourse. Some speculate that this may be due to lack of knowledge on the part of women about their rights and what is here to support them should those rights be infringed upon. But most professionals and students told us that it really has to do with women not trusting that their confidentiality will be respected should they complain, and their fear that they will face some kind of retaliation. We hope that the University's legal counsel can provide guidance as we work to eradicate harassment from our climate.

Some have suggested to us that a Women's Center is needed at DePauw to serve as a physical space where the academics and the advocates can come together to educate the DePauw community about issues important to women, as well as to serve as a resource

center and hub for the activities and programs available for women of all walks. We think this is an excellent recommendation and support it, provided a Women's Center could have some degree of autonomy. Certainly the programming on issues for women could be better centralized, and if such a place could host and conduct workshops on topics relevant to all women on campus some healthy mentoring between women employees and women students also could occur. It is also feasible that a Women's Center could provide a resource for the Putnam County community. Of course, the primary benefit of a Women's Center on campus would be the signal it would send to the DePauw community that the University takes seriously its commitment to developing a healthy and supportive climate for women.

We were asked by the President to recommend the structure of continuing organizations that will provide oversight of the status of women at DePauw. Our primary recommendation on this front is that the many services and pieces of infrastructure be unified in a way that strengthens them, lengthens their reach, and brings the importance of the issues front and center within the DePauw community. Whether that be through the work of an ongoing committee that is charged with picking up where we leave off, or one that is appointed to investigate the feasibility of a Women's Center, which then could be charged with working toward unification in some way, or another model, we expect that some individual or group will begin the next phase of this important work.

This will not be easy work. It will require a commitment from the President and his Cabinet that must be sustained over a long period of time. Clearly, there are short-term

recommendations noted in this report, which, if implemented, could improve the lives of all women at DePauw. But we also recognize the difficulty of making long-term changes in any institution. We hope that when the next Task Force on the Status of Women at DePauw submits its report, it will conclude that DePauw has continued to make progress in enhancing the lives of women here.